







**RHODANTHE**  
**OR**  
**THE ROSE IN THE GARDEN OF THE**  
**SOUL'S DELIGHT**





# RHODANTHE

OR

THE ROSE IN THE GARDEN OF THE  
SOUL'S DELIGHT

A POETIC FANTASY

BY

CHARLES LOUIS PALMS



THE MARION PRESS

JAMAICA QUEENSBOROUGH NEW YORK

MCMXVII

PG 3531  
.A45 R5  
1917



Copyright, 1917, by CHARLES LOUIS PALMS

All rights reserved



MAY -8 1917

©CLA460641

m. l.

TO  
C. C.



RHODANTHE  
OR  
THE ROSE IN THE GARDEN OF THE  
SOUL'S DELIGHT

---

Est rosa flos Veneris.  
*Old Latin Ode.*

BOOK I

---

SPRING, in her flowered amice, and her wreath  
Of Mary-buds had come to town! Beneath  
The rosy palms of her white feet, Love strewed  
Aurora's tears shed for her son; and wooed  
Was she by sweet sequestered quires of birds:  
For she had lingered long away, and words  
Heavened in music, from glad planes and pines,  
Hailed her from Hiems crowned in the Apennines!  
The morning-stars had sung her, as of yore  
At her nativity, and Sol his floor  
Celestial paven had with brilliancies  
Unparagoned, to show his ecstasies  
At her enthronement. 'Twas a day earth smiled,

At last, as one will after months beguiled  
By weary winter's rueful frowns.—And now  
The holiday was over, and from her brow  
Engarlanded the buds are soon untressed;  
And lullabied with carollings, at rest  
She lies in Nature's loving arms,—to sleep  
The night,—and wistful flowers 'gin to weep.

O Night—with what dark magic dost thou thrill  
The universal heart! How all is still!  
Day's motley train hath fled the cypress-gloom,  
And guardian-silence of thy ghostly tomb;  
Softly old Arno toward his sea-home creeps;  
Softly the moonbeam o'er his bosom leaps;  
Fair 'mid her Tuscan hill-crowns Florence sleeps.  
All, all is hushed, and fairies in their rings,  
Give way to sorceries and weird ministerings;  
Poets, and Singers, Sages mock pale Death,—  
And even as if their souls stalked forth in stealth  
To wander free, the air surchargèd, teems  
With inspiration. So, at least, it seems  
To me, as woe-distraught, I walk alone,  
My shadow and myself attuned as one,  
Along Lung' Arno.

Many a time and oft,  
Wooing Urania, in the heavenly loft  
Pavilioned, I, in contemplation rapt,  
Had roamed the storied streets of Florence, lapped  
In flowers,—“The Beautiful;”—to wend my way  
To Rosamund’s garden-close, which ’long the kay  
Of Arno trailed its glories, wreathed in bays.  
To Rosamund I would fly, as elfish rays  
Back to their sun return; and all the world  
Echoed with song! But now, alas, impearled  
In tears, the song is voiceless; and for weeks  
The flowers hide their dew-bedabbled cheeks,  
When I among them walk,—for my dear love  
Is dead. Ah! now no more the sheen of dove  
Is on the dawn; no more her sister-flowers  
Wondrously watch her, as in beauty she towers  
Among them: none shall succor them; instead,  
They, too, alas, must die. Thy purple head,  
Poor foolish Columbine, shall droop and pine;  
Ye Gales, fond Gilliflowers, Sops-in-Wine,  
That in my Shepherd’s Calendar did mark  
Love’s seasons,—now your days shall all be dark;  
For your fair mistress is forever gone!  
To water you to life my tears alone

Shall flow! Ah, empty, dull to me life's shore!  
The woman that I love lights now no more  
With her effulgent radiance the earth!  
We could not hold her spirit of heavenly birth;  
So pink and white—so like a flower grown,  
She faded ere the summer buds had blown:  
And all the nightingales sat hushed and lone.

Blue as the gentians fringed were her bright eyes,  
Mocking the azure smiles of April's skies;  
Her lips, curled rose-buds, kissed by Summer's rain,  
Parting, exhaled a breath of sweets Hyblæan;  
Her tresses glowed like hearts of marigold,  
Full-bared to heaven, Apollo to enfold;  
Her lily-hand—how cold in mine it stole!  
How veinèd blue the lids!—where once her soul  
Enskied, shone with its pure and earthless love:—  
They bore her beauteous body to the grove  
Of weeping yews, and 'fore a graven pile  
They left me mourning o'er her vanished smile;  
To envy those on whom the crystal wells  
Of her celestial love, where now she dwells.

Into the garden-close I wander, dreary—  
O, ne'er had I so felt the spell of mystery



O'erhanging its deserted ruins!—tree  
And flower trembled paly,—suddenly,  
My heart benumbed is seized with fearful awe  
Of ominous expectation, doubt: I saw  
The earth grow dark; the moon o'ercast; the dirge  
I heard of dying winds; and, then, the surge  
Of air that breathed of Afric's sands, so arid,  
I stifle,—stumble—helpless to have parried  
My fall: but, haply, on a carvèd seat,  
Which once in Cyprus had adorned the sweet,  
Recessèd temple of the flower-faced queen  
Of love and beauty,—sconced now in a screen  
Of her soft myrtles,—measure I my length;  
My heart surceased in dreamful swoon of strength  
To flutter—and I knew no more.—

How long

Thus prone I lay, bound in the ebon thong  
Unconsciousness, I wot not,—ere I seemed  
To hear the Duomo toll—perhaps I dreamed—  
Slowly the midnight hour, the trysting-time  
Of fairy folk;—and, then, the distant chime  
Of an unearthly music lulled my being  
To rhapsody, with mystic urge of seeing  
Beyond the veil,—as though life's golden motes

Dissolved in crystal suns,—as though those notes  
Of distilled sweetness, new to my poor ears,  
Soothed all my senses with delicious fears,  
Disquieting, yet desired. Now, by minions  
Viewless, I 'm lifted, as on airy pinions,  
Athwart the soft ambrosial air; then pales  
My glooming world, as if night's starless scales  
Had fallen from my lidded eyes; and lo!  
In tranced amazement breathlessly I glow,  
Before the dazzling scene unfolded: I hood  
Mine eyes so startling is the sight!

I stood

Within a portico of porphyry  
And gold, bewildering as the vistaed sky;  
With myriad aisles of Doric colonnades,  
And wondrous flights of stairs with balustrades  
Of carved Pentelic,—at the river's edge  
Ending, amid pale lily-pads and sedge.  
Paven it was with jades, and marbles white  
As Pindus, and in oceans bathed of light  
Celestial; scarves and delicatest screens  
Of Tyrian silks in melting hues, warm greens,  
Cerulean, rose,—across the columns pendant,—  
Seek the amorous smiles to veil of the ascendant,

And golden-thronèd Phoebus, from beviae fair  
Of lovely nymphs, and Dryads, dazzling, rare,  
Of archful grace, that 'round me rhythmic dance;  
Strewing crushed petals at my feet, with glance  
Deep-reverent; while their sylph-like bodies sway  
To music of Arcadian Pan, who, gay  
Enwreathed his hornèd poll, I, now, behold  
With 's merry crew, 'mid emblems of the wold,  
A-piping on his reeds, as 't were a dream  
Of sighing for poor Syrinx in the stream.  
Where'er I look rise temple-crownèd mountains;  
While airy sunlight plays on crystal fountains  
Of sweet Castalian springs; in peaceful hopes  
The nestling villas gleam 'mid vine-clad slopes,  
And hanging-gardens like the Hesperides;  
And nymphs disporting in the groves one sees,  
Amid the checkered shade, as if an age  
Of old had strayed out of its Sapphic page;  
Whilst like the lutings of a mourning-dove,—  
As though its nature is to vainly love,—  
A gentle river murmuringly laves  
The cold white marbles of the wharf; its waves,  
Its bosom, heaving for the blue Aegean,  
Haply,—but still it faithful stays to preen,

And shimmeringly mirror in its breast,  
The skies, the fields—each villa's verdant nest.

And whilst I drink in wonder-draughts the scene,  
A comely youth, his soft sweet airs I ween  
Patrician-born, and 'tired for some feast  
Lucullian, bows me low, as would the least  
Plebeian,—Roman, Greek, I wot not which;  
Then links mine arm, and saith, in accents rich  
With human melody, more Lesbian  
Than Latian: "All hail, good friend! upon  
The hour thou 'rt here betimes; I pray thee, pardon  
Our tryst belated; those that honor thee,  
The blessings of the foam-born Deity  
Of Gardens and of Flowers waited. Lo!  
They come, to wish auspicious winds will blow  
For thee, Zephyrus, to his Flora dear."  
In sooth, even as he spoke, from far and near,  
Troops in a pageant, brave and beautiful:  
Cherub-faced children, tender, fanciful  
As Cupid looked at seven; damsels fresh  
For merry-making, in whose smilets' mesh  
Shy swains had fallen, but that matrons, staid  
As Vesta, shadow them, and thus dissuade

The amorous sport; youths, fair of hair and lithe,  
With sheaves of golden corn; and maidens blithe,  
Loaden with osiers piled with mellowest fruits,  
With nard and incense and sweet-smelling roots;  
Some with the Naiad's trophy, Plenty's horn;  
Shepherds with crooks, and Shepherdesses born  
To featly dight a meadow's daisied lawn;  
Ceres herself, in cloud-wrapt chariot drawn,  
Her raven tresses pranked with scarlet poppies;  
Vertumnus, god of orchards, too, his eyes  
Ogling askance the luscious grapes his wife  
Pomona 'fore him dangles for his strife.  
But midst the crowd, of all the cynosure,  
Are dainty maidens, rosy, lily-pure—  
Belike a dozen—who seem from the skies  
To have dropped,—else hath some god bewitched mine eyes!  
Truly they sway about like lovely flowers;  
Their dewy kirtles fresh from April showers;  
With smiles and tears bright on their cheeks, all dimpled  
Fair divine; in gold and crimson whimpled,  
With azure eyes—. But flower-beings to walk,  
To nod, to bow, and chirrup on their stalk,  
Like magpies!—'t is, indeed, incredulous!  
And I do pinch myself half-querulous

With pain—and still in wonder take the truth:  
Content to think, here's "Dian's Bud," forsooth;  
"Love-in-the-Mist," and "Love-in-Idleness,"  
Pale Primrose, and eke "Eyebright"—in their dress  
Of cerule radiance,—rose, and pink, and lily—  
Flower-beings, truly, willy-nilly!  
So let my seeing and belief concur.

"Is 't holiday in high Olympus, sir?"  
I ask my Ganymede. With gentle purr,  
He smiles, "Be patient"—so my qualms I smother.  
The throngers greet me as they would a brother;  
Their voices' soft susurrus lulls the breeze,  
Like buzzing exodus of honey bees.  
Warmly I am "All hailed!" as Caesar might be;  
As one beloved and by the Thunderer rightly  
High-favored;—but not knowing why or how,  
I stammer words I scarce remember now.  
Around me all the multitude foregathers;  
Modelled to sons by patriarchal fathers,—  
To mothers loom I as a future son.  
The music waxes to its diapason;  
Whilst in a weirder, wilder beauty has burst  
The Corybantic dance. Now, whereas erst

No cloud appeared to mirth, a parting note  
Of poignant sadness I divine afloat  
Upon the air; though laugh the ruddy lips,  
The eyes in tears, the heart in sorrow grips,  
Whispering "*Addio*": as though this heavenly expanse  
Of scene the crowd is loth to leave—perchance,  
Fore'er,—this spot of earth supremely lovely.

Its reason I inquire,—but, hurriedly,  
My Sphinx-like friend has gained the river-side;  
I dog his deer-swift steps, all Argus-eyed,—  
When, curiously, the air with pungent sweetness  
O'erpowers me; and, with a lightning fleetness,  
My senses whirl from Lethe-draughts drunk deep:—  
And as in Lotus-dreams of rose-stoled sleep,  
Visions of airy splendors rise, I see,  
As in a magic mirror of ancientsry,  
In diamond mist of sunlight all a-quiver,  
Loom up upon the bosom of the river,  
An iris-lovely, fairy-vessel! lit  
With rippling smiles the waters herald it;  
It glides along like Leda with a grace  
Ineffable; ay, fancy seems apace  
To riot, for 't now appears a Flower-ship,

Or some ærial garden in the slip  
Of river floating, as if through some rift,  
An isle of Paradise had run adrift.

Engarlanded are mast and poop and prow,  
With blooms that had made Tempe blush and bow,  
Her shows out-miracled,—and mine eyes confuse,  
With tints the rainbow's iridescent hues  
Had mocked in vain,—from vermeil dew-lipped rose,  
To sweetest woodland violet that grows;  
To tender, twining, scented eglantine;  
To all earth's myriad buds, bright, hyaline,—  
Jewels, like stars, that deck her day and night,  
Making a heaven for man's dear delight!  
All these blaze forth enpanoplied in glory,  
Beyond the wildest dreams of rhyme or story:  
The flaming creepers trellis o'er the shrouds;  
Pale clematis, in soft purpureal clouds,  
O'ercanopies the decks in sombre moods;  
The benches twined with love-knots of the woods;  
And all the dripping oars, with rare peach-blossom  
Enwreathèd, from the riches, which embosom  
The river, filch pure gems of orient pearls  
And opalescent drops,—the flower-whorls



Bedighting with a sweet reflected beauty.—  
The dream-boat 's steered by hands invisibly;  
It stops,—and, to my awful wonderment,  
As if by Hermes' magic disenthralment,  
The vessel with enchanted life doth seem  
In multi-colored loveliness to teem:  
She docks; lo, cables long of pied and streaked  
Convolvulus are cast ashore, and eked  
Full taut to bind her fast; the spicèd air  
Lulls me to poppy-slumber; dimly I hear  
Faint tristful "Fare-thee-wells," and blushing kisses  
Swift stolen, as, alas, all earthly blisses!  
My Mentor claps my shoulder, and, ere I  
Can find my wildered tongue, or even sigh  
Amazement free—I 'm on the bark; then, Pan  
And 's crew, still piping, follow to a man;  
Then all the nymphs, and dancing Dryads too,  
Sweet lads and lassies, and the entire crew.

They jostle, jest; they laugh, they sing together;  
Now they are off, tears stanchèd—they 're in fine feather!  
So on our earth had ordinary mortals done,—  
These, rarer spirits of a sphere Elysian,  
Ethereal! But, where'er emotion springs,

The notes of heaven or earth sweep o'er Life's strings,  
With music of the self-same sweet alluring!—  
A joyous shout! The vessel slips her mooring,  
And as a star had fled 'fore Phaeton's fire,  
It swiftly steals away. I scarce suspire,  
From whelming sense of mystery and awe,  
At every Nature's nice inexorable law  
Ruthless subversed: yet is there no ado  
Or dissonance; the noiseless, unseen crew,  
Clamber the shrouds, I trow, for sails upsoar;  
With rhythmic cadence swings the impatient oar;  
And languorously o'er the water's blue we ride,  
The while the living Flowers strangely glide,  
Like fairies through a garden fair. Commands  
From wreathèd conch-shells sound, and all the hands  
Speed on its way the bark with soft acclaims  
Of joy. Now on the air there fall sweet names,  
Of Basil, Amaryllis, Asphodel,—  
As though they meet and kiss 'neath love's old spell,—  
Of Lotis, Rosemary and Daffodil,  
Mingled with honeyed sighs that haunt me still.  
“Who are these blessèd beings?” from my guide  
Enlightenment I seek,—“and whither ride  
We now away?” Proudly the youth towers:

“Our craft is making for the Isle of Flowers,  
Where Flora dwells, fair Goddess Crystalline;  
And these are subjects of her realm benign,”  
He saith, “all happily homeward bound, you see;  
They ’re from a pilgrimage in Araby,  
Their perfume-bearing school,—to breathe full-blown  
The incense of their souls before the throne  
Of Flora, in her servitude and love;  
Some from the Isle to greet them hither rove:  
Thou saw’st, too, gods and genii of the grove,  
Of fields and gardens and the sacred fount;  
Ay, deities of the high Thessalian Mount,  
Come bid them long farewell upon the ways;  
From Ceres to the simplest of the fays;  
The dew of tears did mutely witness there,  
That parting home was easier to bear,  
Than longings nourished for the Flowery Isle.—”  
With this, across the empurpled deep sometime  
He pointed,—for we now, unconsciously,  
Had entered Neptune’s wider realm the sea:  
“Behold yon golden parapets, where gleam  
The farewell kisses, Phoebus, in his dream  
Of dying, lingeringly lavishes  
Upon the closing day, and ravishes

The eye with beauty,—there doth lie the Land  
Of Flowers, and there, the Goddess Flora's wand  
Enchanting, Nature charms with loving yoke:  
And when the sable Leto's star-woven cloak  
Enfolds the world, and tired mortals sleep,  
Her Flower-Pixies zone the earth, and sweep,  
And gardens dight from Indus to the poles;  
And fright away the cankers, slugs, and moles;  
While Flower-Elves brush hoar-rime from each rose,  
And 'gainst the frost the rash corollas close;  
And when the blue-bells swing full airily,—  
Though thou couldst not detect their harmony  
Exquisite, when they tell the midnight hour,—  
The spirits troop from every lovely Flower  
Being asleep, and wander hill and dell  
Delectable of earth, to briefly dwell  
With their terrestrial brethren; and then,  
In Flora's kingdom death seems in the ken  
Of all; the soul-less Flowers droop their heads;  
The blenchèd hue of dissolution spreads  
Over their rosy petals; and their perfume  
Wanes on the air, until, with faint illume,  
Aurora, blushing paly as she rises  
From false amours of Cephalus, surprises

The slumbering world: then, all the shadowy throng  
To their coronas hie themselves headlong,  
Ere day's proclaimed.

“And for that thou hast lost

Thy lady fair,—who dear the starry host  
Of earth cherished, so that they thrilled in bloom  
Unparagoned, and from her teeming womb  
Burst forth in wingèd splendor unsurpassed,—  
As guerdon of her true-love tears, thou wast  
Vouchsafed by Flora, Goddess Argentine.  
The keys unto her City Palatine,—  
A gift to mortals never yet accorded:  
There shalt thou find in foison thee afforded,  
Surcease of every sorrow and despite;  
And sipping Hybla's honey of delight,  
Live, learn and love anew.” Thus spake the youth;  
And as I gazed, the silvery veil, insooth,  
Of spangly moonbeams, which bright Cynthia trails  
Over the rippling waters, swathes our sails;  
And one by one the lamps of heaven are trimmed,  
That carols by the seraphs may be hymned  
To daisied Night in adoration:—  
And as we near our destination,  
Nereïds from out the pearly waters rise,

Languidly swaying in liquid lullabies  
Upon the listless undulating sea;  
Haply, they come to greet us, for I see  
Some bearing odorous garlands, others ropes  
Of blossoms, corals, magic heliotropes,  
By the Hours weaved; these to our vessel's side  
They gaily fasten; faster on we glide,  
Midst merry laughing songs of such as roam  
No more afar—soon warmly welcomed home.  
Now in the phosphor-gleaming waves disport  
The playful dolphins; and all Neptune's court  
In amorous retinue charms us in to port;  
Cygnet and snow-white swans, belovèd by  
The Paphian goddess-queen, glide gracefully  
Along the sacred shore, as we draw nigh;  
Whilst Triton's winding horn with melody  
Floodeth the night. And now, at last, we plough  
Our latest furrow, and on our curvèd prow  
Light Cupid's doves, by his fond mother sent,  
To augur our safe harborage and advent.

Now on the bark the wild'st confusion reigns,  
As there loom up before our eyes, the fanes  
Enchanting, towers of gracefulness supreme,

And golden gates, of what to me doth seem,  
Some fabled Island of Atlantis blest;  
Or an Elysium by Pindar tressed  
In tender lays of lyric tunefulness,—  
So ravishing its faery loveliness!  
Its multitudinous temples, mosques; its domes,  
Pale rose and hyacinthine glowing, poems  
In Parian marbles,—which in sacred fire  
Apollo might have conjured up with 's lyre,  
As he did Troy,—are maze-like even to tire  
Imagination, and had fancy wronged.  
Its quays, paved with Carrara's snows, are thronged;  
To the water's edge the populace hath strayed,  
In all its silks and damasks fine arrayed;  
While dancing nymphs, and maids, and Coryphées,  
With dulcet voices sing melodious lays,  
To dreamy music of the lulling lute-string,  
And sway my soul to ecstasy! They ring  
Sweet silver bells, and with resounding cheers,  
Regreet us newly, till my wildered ears,  
Wondrously thrilled with sounds of kissing cymbals,  
With beating of the throbbing drums and timbrels—  
Make me to close mine eyes in dreamful flight  
Of dying midst such languorous delight!

Whilst my rapt soul in heaven seems to wake,  
To me the Hermes of my voyage spake:  
"Thou 'rt tenfold honored, mortal, for, behold,  
Without the city gates of beaten gold,  
Flora, the Goddess Opaline, appears  
In stately palanquin enthroned; and peers,  
Princesses, nobles, all her august court  
Contains of beauty, wealth, as her escort,  
To meet thee by the water-side. Her lord,  
The gentle Zephyr, by whom the queen 's adored,—  
Though now abroad he haply seeks to assuage  
The boisterous Aeolus's spluttering rage,—  
Yet wafted was our vessel to Flora's feet,  
By 's plaintive sighing for his mistress sweet."  
And, verily, the scene with splendor shone!  
Too swift the dizzy flight to Helicon  
For my poor muse's moth-like wings! Too well,  
This pomp and pageantry processional,  
Which pours upon the ways and lines the strand,  
For glittering miles it seems where I must land,  
I fear may prove some bright mirage, some vision,  
Inveigling my wild fancy past volition!  
Not in dream-fabrics, fairy-born, or gnome;  
Not in the golden days of Greece or Rome,



Was half this glory seen—ay, ne'er before!  
I trembling gaze upon that heavenly shore,  
While mists of happy tears, bright from the fount  
Pierian of pure joy, do silverly mount,  
Suffusing all mine eyes; and cheeks bepaint  
With briny runlets. With emotions faint,  
Succumbs my spirit in its ardent flame:  
I hear the wondrous multitude acclaim  
Their queen, and marvel at the royal visit  
I am vouchsafed.

With snugness exquisite,  
Our flower-bark within her island berth  
Lays up her fragrant beauty; and, to earth  
Safely consigned, we leave her friendly deck.  
I'm led away, with steps that scarcely reckon  
Their path, by Flora's proud ambassadors,  
Appointed to my care: each one adores  
Some Lady-Flower fair, and slyly mourned  
Attendance on her; each one is adorned  
In glittering livery of his Queen,—unstinted  
Their poppy-scarlet, thymy-purple, tinted  
Pansy-hues, and warmest sylvan greens;  
Accompanying them in cowslip-yellow sheens,

With rubies flecked, are tiny elves. We pass  
O'er three-piled blossoms and sweet smelling grass,  
Softer than rugs of Persian looms; apace  
With us, fair virgins clothed in Hebe's grace,  
Lute-voiced, strew rosy chaplets in our way.  
Forthwith to Flora I my homage pay:  
Four giant Nubians—ebon columns—stay  
Her litter downy-light, which, at a sign  
Of her fair lily-hand, they slow recline  
Upon the enrichèd earth. The Goddess lifts  
The jealous veil her beauty hides, as rifts  
Disparting in the clouds disclose fair heaven:  
O Deity divine! O bliss! and leaven  
Ambrosial of life's melancholiness!  
High majesty! Empyrean loveliness!  
And yet, withal, what woman's tenderness  
Exhaleth from those eyes of starry shine!  
Half-blinded, kneel I down as 'fore a shrine;  
I kiss her rosy finger-tips; she smiles;  
The rays of April's daisies, in their wiles  
Bedazzling, are not whiter than those pearls  
Bejewelling her bud-pink mouth; two worlds  
Of blue her eyes; two dewy violets  
The lids; the lashes' fringed-curtain lets

Out languid lights; her damask cheeks aglow,  
Are rosy-petals fallen on the snow;  
Her red lips laugh to scorn the poppy blow;  
And fields of golden daffodils in spring,  
Shifting their hues as in the breeze they swing,  
Flaunt not such glorious tones as can compare,  
With the abounding sunshine of her wavy hair;  
The fragrant curls in tangled masses 'scape  
Entrancingly adown the neck's white nape,  
Disdaining their confining crown, which Mars  
Had envied—set with jewels like the stars.

I stood bewildered in her awesome presence;  
But having made my deep obeisance,  
The Goddess bids me rise; with gentle wave,  
Motions her page, a clove-pink little knave,—  
Who on a pearl-embossèd cushion holds  
The fairy key of vines and leavèd scrolls,  
Which opes the doors of her enchanting isle.  
This sweetly she presents to me—the while  
Blushing, I stammer, “O your Majesty,  
This honor,—” but, full feat and graciously,  
Dismisses she my proffered gratitude,  
Pointing to where four stalwart slaves, bronze-hued,

With skins of pard slung 'cross their shoulders nude,  
Awaited me, beside a sedan-chair  
Of sandal-wood, and ivory carvings rare,  
Inlaid with precious Indian pearls. Her sweet  
Behest obey I, and accept the seat  
Tendered to me; straightway, I'm borne aloft  
Amid huzzas; reclining on the soft  
Beflowered satin, I nod the admiring throng:  
It is a signal for a burst of song,  
And Lydian music, and the glittering train  
In martial pomp moves on. Full soon, we gain  
The city gate 'fore which I gape amazed!  
'Tis intertwined wistaria, gold-emblazed;  
Hand-forged the blossoms in enamelled hues,  
So living beautiful, one cannot choose  
But tempt to pluck them; 'mid the entwining vines  
Innumerable exotic birds, whose color blinds,  
Seem on the wing, as in an aviary fair  
Of trellised gold, and weave the screen with rare  
Refulgence. 'Tis the wonder-work, weird, vast,  
Of gnomish artisans. A sennet's blast,  
Silverly prolonged, enthrills the silence; lo,  
The gate with sudden instinct opens slow,  
And with a magic musical, upon

Its hinges; then anew we hasten on.  
Triumphantly we enter Flora's walls,  
Whose garden-esplanade at once enthrals  
The eye,—where flowers, which should their vigils keep  
Seem now to hang their heavy heads in sleep;  
But as we pass, they lift their tired petals,  
And sigh so, that a shower of perfume falls  
Upon 's, and I, well-nigh of sweetest pain  
Expire.

Now, once within the flowery domain,—  
Ah, then the o'erwhelming beauty of the scene  
With planetary force compounds to wean  
The mind from sense. I see, as in a dream,  
What oft I dreamed to see, but dared not deem  
My fortunate stars would lift these mortal clods:  
In sooth, a faery-city of the gods;  
With fanes to Ceres raised, where orisons  
Besiege fond Nature's ear; with Pantheons,  
Where Flower-Heroes live immortalized;  
With noble aqueducts ambrosialized  
By crystal streams from Arethusa bright;  
With isles enflowered, and sunken gardens dight;  
With palaces of ivory and gold,

Outrivaling the Acropolis tenfold,  
Or temples famed, which o'er Tarpeia sheer,  
By Tiber's banks, eternal heads uprear.  
Softly o'er all the opal moonlight stole;  
And chastely as the bridal gloriole  
It glowed, which Gaea, the tender virgin, wore,  
When she to Heaven was wed: and rising o'er  
The luminous mists that wreath the encircling hills,  
The glistening columns, domes, and towers, guilds,  
And mansionries of carved Pentelic 'pear  
Kissing the clouds, or melting in the clear  
Star-galaxies above, so that one wondered,  
Where heaven 'gan or earth; or, if dissundered,  
Then 't was a faery-city, part celestial;  
Some Master-builder's dream imperishable;  
Where stone on stone, in strange harmonious desire,  
Had reared themselves in beauty, whilst on 's lyre  
Amphion sang in ecstasied delight.

We wander on as in the meads of light,—  
As in Elysium, where live the blest;  
And all is hushed and in devotional rest,  
As though the sanctity of beauty moves  
The soul to inward worship, and to loves

Too sempiternal for ephemeral hours;  
Save that from nodding fields of ghostly flowers,  
There faintly falls upon the ear the drone  
Of insects, as they chant in monotone  
Their vesper-songs; and, ever and anon,  
Blithe Philomel, to her pomegranate gone,  
Seeking her love, but finds her flown,—too late,—  
In liquid golden notes calls to her mate,  
Thrilling the veil of night with melody!  
Thou carolling spirit of love! Call'st thou to me?  
O bliss, fore'er to linger 'mong the flowers,  
One's only friends, nor feel the pain that lowers  
The brow into each dark and wrinkled line!  
Here perfect truth, and love, and duty shine;  
In sun-blazed raiment of Hyperion,  
Frightening the soul with loveliness, or spun  
In mazeful kirtles, and in starry shoon,—  
Or simple silvery livery of the moon;  
Here beauty never dies—'t is spring alway;  
Death is unknown, or blight, or winter's fray,  
Aeolian blast, or autumn's sere decay;  
Here all 's sweet life, soft ease, rich fruitfulness.  
O here, then, would I stay, and dream,—no less  
Than an eternity would be too short,—

And love some lady fair of Flora's court,  
Whose sweetness heavy-lades the air entire,  
As with the incense of her heart's desire.

We entered now an avenue of trees,  
Of poplars tall; their boughs,—with broideries,  
Flickering pale like frightened maidens' cheeks,—  
Uplifted heavenward; 't is quiet; no one speaks;  
I look for my good Virgil—he is gone;  
I 'm with the Goddess and her train alone—  
Ready no doubt for heavenlier guidance grown.  
Into more shadowy deeps of arching leaves,  
My swart-skinned Ethiops press; where 'neath the eaves  
Of the arborous dusk Titania glorifies  
Her day, by massing starry fireflies,  
Her minions, into molten globules, hung  
At intervals along the way; and strung,  
Like fairy lanterns for a royal fête,  
Shine iridescent glowworms, who dilate  
Bravely their luminous bodies, till these bowers,  
Gnomed by the owlet night, glisten with showers  
Of radiance, so like day, that in amaze  
The song-birds wake to greet us with their lays.  
All 's redolent with scents to me for years



Forgot—whose memories to mine eyes bring tears;  
Thwart which, I see the “Scarlet Runners’” ears  
Aflame, pricked up to catch at better angles  
Our progress; and the “Ragged Locks,” their tangles  
Superbly tossed, like schoolgirls from a lark.—  
At length, emerging from the verdurous dark,—  
As Orpheus from the Shades, beheld at last  
The glad Avernian vales,—I stand aghast,  
Bedazzled, to see a palace heavenward rise,  
Unutterably beautiful; its size  
Unrivalled by those splendors, which for miles  
Pavilion Phoebus in his Western Isles.  
It is the Goddess’ divine demesne!  
'T is all of gold, bedight with gems that e'en  
Their flames scintillant dart to the flooding moon;  
Rubies, and sapphires, pearls, carbuncles, strewn  
With largesse inconceivable by man;  
With chrysolites ablaze, and domes that span  
Its ocean vastness, arched in rainbow-wise,—  
And steps that seem to lead to Paradise.

The Apollonian blackamoors now lower  
Their precious burden, their sweet Queen. Not slower  
Am I to hasten from my littered chair,

To assist her to alight. She gems the air  
With loveliness, and her adoring train  
In widening cirque retire; their voices wane  
Melodiously fainter in the enclosing night;  
Lute-sighs grow softer, and the lyre's might  
Impassioned trembles to wane minstrelsy;  
The cymbal-players' notes float off to die,  
Where Echo sits and mourns; the seraphims,  
And dancing-girls, compose their rhythmic limbs,  
'Neath veils that limn their perfect loveliness;  
Whilst on their bosoms, soft and blemishless  
As Horeb's snows, and rising with the thrill  
Exultant of the dance, they try to still  
Their trembling tambourines.— The general will  
To deferently homage pay their Sovereign,  
Now prompts the ladies and the liegemen in  
Her train to reverently remain aloof,  
Save those few favorites who, by time's strong proof,  
Love warrants that they stay, full dotingly  
To wait upon her trivial wants,—and me,  
Prince Fortunatus:—all the rest withdraw.  
I now approach her august presence with awe;  
I sink upon one knee, veiled in eclipse  
Mine eyes. There breaks forth from her rosy lips

A gracious smile, like to the iris light,  
Herald of early dawn. O luckiest wight!  
Feel'st not those flower-fingers touch thy hand,  
Quivering the depths of all thy being, and  
O'erpowering speech? Now mine eyes unveil,  
To slake my thirst at nature's nonpareil  
Of majesty,—and love broods in my heart.—  
With movement light as when the lithe young hart  
Springs forth from covert toward the mountain rills,  
Or moon-beams gliding o'er the lush-green hills,  
Her fairy-footsteps scorn the mossy earth,  
Spread richly o'er with cloth-of-gold. No dearth  
Lacks here of sovereignty, though eased its law.  
Full soon, she stands, enpanoplied in awe  
Majestical, where but a Goddess dares,  
Upon her sacred temple's steps; and wears  
The magic mystery of the heavenly night  
About her; and, as in a dream's dazed sight,  
I watch her wave her willing maids away:  
The royal train may come as best they may;  
Then, turning toward me with the imperious toss  
Of sovran graciousness, which I'm at loss  
To fathom, bids me on. I go with glee,  
Yet shrouded in exceeding mystery;

My heart aflame with strangely sweet emotions;  
But for the fair love laughs at pathless oceans!

We scarcely seem the golden steps to graze,  
But wafted are in cloud-like amber haze,  
As on the wings of golden butterflies.  
Our path is blazed by star-lit phantasies;  
We speed o'er flights of terraced walks, and sail  
Past flowering meads, and murmuring fountains pale  
With dripping moonlight; gardens, trembling fair,  
Shedding rare incense in the pendulous air;  
Past brodered knots, and past long vistas green,  
With royal palms that plume their honor e'en  
As high as heaven; here a bright lagoon,  
Mirrors the sward, with Phidian marbles strewn.—  
While all enraptured to the skies we mount,  
Mine eyes must needs drink deep at beauty's fount;  
Such beauty-draughts as would a god make whole,  
If one could weave such beauty in the soul,  
As from the sea the sun's seductive rays  
Unwreath the sapphire clouds. As my fixed gaze  
The Deity feels upon her vermeil cheek,  
She turns to me, and gently 'gins to speak,  
In balm-sweet words, that bud 'mid witching smiles,

And thrill my heart as April's sunny wiles,  
Revivify the floweret's drooping brow.

“O Mortal, favored of thy fellows, thou!  
For from thy gross unpurgèd sphere of earth,  
No froward denizen of doomful birth,  
Hath dared imprint a clayey foot in this  
Our flowery realm; wherefore, 't is not amiss  
Thou learn'st, that in degree above thy kind,  
Shalt thou, vouchsafèd by the gods, here find  
A pilgrim's stay in a forbidden land;  
And with the spirits of my immortal band  
Untrammelled converse hold; and thou mayst hope,  
And presently, unprecedented scope  
Of our fair temple's inmost sanctuary:  
And for thou ever didst the paths of beauty  
Tread and retread within thy nether world,  
Thou 'lt even the daughters of our house, impearled  
Within our temple's holy shrine, glimpse o'er  
A fleeting space, to worship and adore,—  
Learning the pure delight man may attain  
In beauty paradisial; thy pain,  
Remembering that thou 'rt mortal, tarrying here  
An instant's breath, with spirits of a sphere,

Freer, eternal, and to rarer ways  
Attuned than thou, whose cloven-hoof bewrays  
What race claims thee. We flourished ere the first  
Parental sin cast thee, for aye accurst,  
Thine extinct orb terrestrial to trod  
In role of darkly groping demi-god.  
And since it is the fiat fixed by Fate,  
That mortal and immortal cannot mate,—  
No more than metal can assimilate  
With air,—therefore forget it to thy woe!  
Dare not the blind boy Eros with his bow,  
A golden shaft to thunder at thy breast;  
Nor sigh the bud of love to burgeon, lest  
Thou weary ages ere it flower,—its root  
Sicklied to ashes like the Dead-Sea fruit;  
While thou more fond than pale Narcissus gloat  
Upon a gleaming shadow to the dote  
Of madness driven and a fell despair.”

She paused, and sighed,—a tribute unaware  
Perchance to Zephyrus,—and seemed, forsooth,  
To pity me. I, blushing at the truth  
Clamant, replied as one whom love o’erpowers:  
“Belovèd Mistress of these fairy bowers,

Thou bidd'st the heart, more liberal than the wind,  
Freer than airy birds home-nests to find  
In skiey eerie or in cavern's mouth;  
When clouds are sneaping cold to woo the south;  
More unconfined than the unchained deep;  
Less fettered than the silvery lives that creep  
In her unbottomed vast abyss,—I say,  
Thou bidd'st it to a task it will not weigh!  
Impossible from sovereignty thou move  
The heart to slavery in its realms of love!  
In those illimitable regions where  
It will be happiest,—for full soon 't is there  
'T will gravitate; if there's no reason to it—  
Still is it sweetest even when time to rue it.  
For Love's the master-spirit of the world,  
Of heaven and earth! Man, maid, beast, bird, all hurled  
Before his golden trumpet blast, to throng,  
Mortal and immortal, toward his song,—  
Which sweetly in Olympus weaves its spell,  
As in the flowered meads of Asphodel;  
Or in the plains Elysian: I do fear,  
Lady, it turns the axis of thy sphere;  
And, mortal though I be, Queen, Hyaline,  
My soul doth for a love immortal pine,—

Ay, panteth ever. Know, my earth-born love  
Is dead,—nay, Was it love? or not above  
Platonic? Am I false? O, is it wrong,  
That fain am I to list love's siren-song?  
No! Where the sovran-queen of beauty's throned  
Must Cupid worship; and, in sooth, though zoned  
With curtains were the windows of my soul,  
Naught 't would avail; armed gods cannot control  
What beauty's eyes compel!" I stopped; aloof  
I stood, as with pursed lips in sweet reproof,  
The Goddess spake:

"We shall not toy with truth:

Alas, I see thine eyes are glazed, fond youth;  
Ay, filmèd o'er like all thy temporal race;  
Thou canst not see beyond the fortelace  
Of beauty's brave domain. What thou call'st love,  
Is but the fluttering of the mourning-dove  
Within thy heart's soft cote; or senses sick;  
Such love, but beauty-born, O fleeteth quick,  
As snow-wreaths melt in brawling mountain-brooks,  
When blackbirds chirrup from their leafy nooks,  
Warm summer-time is nigh. True love's begot  
In Hymen's treasure-trove; the golden-knot  
There forged for pairing souls from birth of Dawn;



And from the dreamful planets are they drawn;  
And from the stars they issue, seeking one  
The other, in strange mystic mazes dun;  
In wandering circles, like pale spirits lost,  
Crying aloud, where wildernesses crossed,  
For one they love, to meet, and to assuage  
The eternal yearning and their torment's rage:  
And, when they meet, they into love's white star  
Melt all anew, while pain and anguish are  
Appeased forever and sweet solace 't is,  
In everlasting and a day-long bliss.  
So, in thy days, fond youth, remember this:  
The soul doth shine continual as the sun,  
Behind the clouds that thou dost gaze upon;  
Wherefore gape not o'erwrought in ecstasy,  
On every vermeil cheek where roves the eye;  
First seek the soul beyond the azure lid;  
'T will like the sun illumine all though hid;  
And mark—the timorous violet, which sighs  
Her sweets unseen in simple modesties,  
May prove more constant than that Empress stately,  
The Crown Imperial, in full gorgeous livery.  
Beauty is oft a rose-lipped empty shell,  
Which echoes but the roaring ocean's swell,

Recording not the love the heart could tell.”  
Thus charged the Goddess, and she turned from sight  
Her glorious orbs, which left the widowed Night  
To keep me woful company; and forthright  
We sped; and, in my heart, as in a shrine,  
I sought her hidden meaning to divine.

Now in the moonlight pale as chrysoprase,  
At last alight we at her gates ablaze  
With rubies rare and jewels of the Ind,—  
Which, like the golden grain before the wind,  
At Flora’s soft behest retire themselves  
On golden lyre-sweet hinges, as if elves  
Informed them; and we pass within; and then,  
Through mazes of enchanting chambers, when  
We reached a richly vaulted banquet-hall,—  
The genius of Ictinus in its thrall,—  
Flung open to the azure cool of night;  
So that the o’erarching heavens at this height,  
Meseemed its cerule, starry-studded dome.  
Pale perfumed tapers through the violet gloam,  
Cast soft caressing shadows; objects, faint  
As though one darkly on a picture quaint  
Stood gazing, dimly ranged themselves about;

All scarce discerned, till by the light's slow rout,  
The eye more friendly with the darkness grew,  
Disclosing lothly to the enravished view,  
The loveliest group of maidens fair, reclining,  
In Roman fashion, on soft couches, shining  
With broideries rare of jewels and of gold;  
Like unto Graces seven,—and more high-souled  
Than were the Three,—divinely clustered round  
Low tables pearl inlaid and flower-crowned:  
The walls were hung with rich-wrought tapestries  
From ancient Persia, telling wondrous stories  
In colors rivalling the rainbow's hues—  
How Ariadne from the labyrinth's mews,  
Led forth her captive lord,—alas, her woes!—  
And faithless lover: from jewelled censers rose  
Curled silver clouds of frankincense deft-mingled  
With myrrh, so pungent, that the senses tingled;  
And from the loft o'erhead, as from a near  
Olympus, falls upon the enraptured ear  
The music of celestial quires, faint,  
Methinks, as that first morn, when love's constraint,  
Bursting its bonds, the spheres began their song  
In joyous jubilation 'fore the throng  
Seraphic of the gods, to tent their forces

In new-created and eternal courses:  
On richly laden boards, in clustering piles,  
Fruits mellowed 'neath Pomona's rubious smiles,  
Lay heaped, and there had spillèd high, good Ceres,  
Her plenteous horn; and there were cornel-berries,  
Coral-red,—with sun-kissed olives, wise  
Minerva's gift,—beside food of the skies,  
Ambrosia, fragrant for ensainted lives,—  
And honey from far Hybla's sacred hives:  
In bay-wreathed flagons wine of Bacchus flared,  
Like bedded rubies that had Sol ensnared;  
And golden nectar glowed in golden cups,  
Entwined with lotus-buds—for him who sups  
To taste of dreamy Lotus-land, and press  
The quivering lips in sweet forgetfulness  
Of teen and tears, when teasing Memory nods;—  
Ah, sooth, here was a feast fit for the gods!

And when fair Flora, Berylline, appears  
Upon this scene Saturnian, dulcet cheers  
Thrill forth her beauteous daughters, and they rise  
Heart-glad to greet her. But it is nowise  
The same, when mortal I stand 'mid these maids:  
It is as when a sparrow-hawk invades

The peaceful cooing dove-cote; now 't would seem  
The Prince of Consternation reigns supreme  
In 's sway, till, taking each one to her breast,  
The Queen assures her fledgling birds the nest  
Is safe, and then, she mothers each young miss  
Caressingly, as one doth fondly kiss  
A tender flower; for they, in sooth, are flowers—  
The blessèd Flower-Princesses, whose dowers  
Are an eternal loveliness; whose course  
On earth well-run, did mark the joyous source  
Whence they were crowned immortal; for they never  
Were wanton with their sweetness, but did ever  
Unto the water-lily, Nymphia, who  
Guardeth the gate of Paradise, give true  
Account of odors rare, and deep desire  
To keep the beauty of their soul's attire.

To me each one her spirit's charm, her grace,  
Her virtues are extolled, as one might trace  
In flower-hues a glorious garden's lure.  
There is Viola, modest and demure;  
She was Ianthus, whom Apollo loved,  
And as a floweret, in the vales removed  
From searching gazes of the god, she laid

Her sweet self shyly in the empurpled shade,  
And sighed pale kisses to the enamoured air.  
Then Lilith, slender, stately, tall, and fair,  
With cheeks of virgin snow and heart of gold;  
In that first garden of the world the mould  
Of airy grace; ay, there she reigned in glory,  
Ere any woman known in rhyme or story;  
A woman crowned with honey-colored hair,  
Enhaloed, chaste as Dian's brow,—more fair.  
Beside her, robed as in a crimson cloud,  
That shames the deep pomegranate red, the proud,  
Imperious Amaryllis sits enthroned;  
Disdainful one! thy conquests are unmoaned,  
Brief-lived, like fiery blossoms that exhale  
Their spirits even as they bloom death-pale.  
And gazing through the casement languorously,—  
Which opens toward the starry eastern sky,—  
I see Clytia, with the dreamful eyes,  
Pale sister of Leucothoe, whose ties  
Of blood played false. Love-lorn! Look'st for thy star?  
Alas, then, pineth still for him, whose car  
Of flaming jasper lingers at the gate  
Of roseate morn, unmindful of thy fate?—  
Then, there's the messenger, to Jove heart-dear,

Ethereal Iris, bearer of good cheer  
To mourning mortals; she, who came to grim,  
And agèd, broken Priam, urging him  
To ransom home the godlike Hector's corse;  
Resplendent in all hues, she holds discourse  
With Asphodel, the frail, of amber hair,  
The friend of sad Persephone,—the pair  
Seeming to mingle fondest memories—  
The one of fields of light, the other's eyes  
With weeping wan, long for the Shades, whose cries  
Floated about her in the vales beyond,  
Where runs the darkling river Acheron.  
There, too, is Dryope, in parti-colors;  
Pale Primrose, where the scarlet Poppy hovers,  
As if to win her from her evening lovers.  
All these and more delight the enravished eye;  
A simple glance reveals each one to me;  
For I behold, as in a dreamful bower,  
A Maiden fair where there 's a fairy Flower,—  
A Flower, rosy-bosomed, wheresoe'er  
There is a Maiden: 't is a garden, where  
Each Flower-maid grows fairer as I gaze;  
I think myself within some mirrored maze,  
Where Beauty's self reflecteth Beauty's mate;

Where Paris had a task Herculean great,  
To weigh at once such deal of loveliness.

But there is one whose beauty's high noblesse,  
Outshines her mates as matchless Hesper shames  
His sister-stars. From first she solely claims  
The Goddess of the Flower's passion,—whiles  
'Tis all from her she kindleth her bright smiles:  
It is Rhodanthe, the flower-miracle,  
The Rose, superb, tall, lithe, ethereal,  
Who from sheer beauty droops in pink alarms,  
For from all roses hath she filched the charms!  
O hundred-leavèd, richest, rarest blown,  
Ever in magic Persian garden known;  
Whose splendor pranked the proud'st Circassian brow,—  
Never didst thou that pearled seraphic glow  
E'er match, which like the auroral dawn on peak  
Of snow, mantles this maiden's milk-white cheek!  
When to the stricken Adonais flew  
The beauteous Cypris through the meadow-rue,  
'Tis said she trod upon a pale white rose;  
By chance a jealous thorn, quick to oppose  
His tender charge, stole from the paragon  
Of womankind some ruby drops, upon



The moment's spur, with which to peerless deck  
His pallid paramour—and from this fleck  
Incarnadine was born the roseal hue,  
Which tints Rhodanthe's soft velvet cheek:—and true  
Alike, 't is told, the Anthelian, as she mourned  
The wounded son of Myrrha, love adorned  
His corse with beauty on its lush green bier;  
Each blood-drop bloomed a rose, each Paphian tear  
Sprung heavenward a frail Anemone;  
And as the goddess gazed and tried to stay  
His sphere's smile, he melted from her view,  
While from his body's golden blood there grew  
Myriads of purple flowers.— But 't is of you,  
Rhodanthe, sweet rose, that I would tune my lays!  
O bird Maeonian, teach me sing the praise  
Of her, the maid amid that flowery maze!  
O temples whiter far than Tabor's snows!  
Like living Parian thy virgin-bosom rose  
And fell; like jewelled crown of topaz bright  
Glisten thy golden tresses in the night;  
And in the azure-light of thy dear eyes,  
Shineth the glory of the noon-day skies;  
And in thy ravishing smile, the onlooker blinds,  
As from the lightning of a soul, which finds

The excess celestial 'scape life's earthly mask—  
O frail Moeonian bird, thou fail'st thy task—  
Alas, it *was* too much of thee to ask!

In fixèd madness lost, my bold intrusion,  
So thoughtless, covers her with sweet confusion,  
As though a placid soul, 'fore love's affright,  
Is bathed all o'er in rosy crystal light;  
And I,—who, but a fleeting space, o'erborne  
On passion's pinions to the empyreal bourne  
Of Flora, by the love-god's blandishments,—  
Now in the toils of other ravishments  
Beheld myself,—and in the kingdom stood,  
Of all that breathes of beautiful and good,  
By love dreamed, fadeless fair as amaranth,  
Enthronèd in bright-aureoled Rhodanthe!  
And, like a pent-up storm, which night enshrouds,  
With groaning rages in the laboring clouds,  
Forecasted by the fitful lightning's flashes,  
At last, unleashed, in fury fiercely crashes  
Thorough the flood-gates of the skies afire,  
And mercilessly beats with scourges dire  
The unhappy face of nature,—my spirit lorn,—

Which ever seemed to nurse a love unborn,—  
Dreaming of dreams, ethereal and eternal,  
But never seemingly attainable,  
Through all the lashing tempest-time of youth,—  
Now swift the current feels of love's sweet truth  
Impulsive sweep all barriers away,  
And pour o'er pied and lilied runnels gay,  
In frenzied and ungovernable bliss,  
Enamelling the world with daedal artifice,  
In fairy likeness of Hesperian Fields!  
Now thrilled with all the emotions young love yields;  
Now icèd with the fear of scorn; now wild  
To woo this being frightened as a child,  
At heavenly-wingèd love; now all afire  
To face for her fell Ate's perils dire;  
Or for her sake, with Phaeton's bribery,  
To scale the heights of heaven's empery;  
It matters not,—naught is impossible—  
Her magic soul casts o'er me such a spell!  
I have no eyes for any other maid;  
My heart like reaper's flail against the blade  
Beats loudly. Love! an thou wouldst but distil  
Thyself in honey-dew, this heart to still  
From hunger, and from such a thirst divine!—

I move toward her—but she makes no sign;  
I seek to take her tender hand in mine,  
As might a gallant kiss it—but, in fine,  
She quick recoils, as doth the sweetly proud  
Mimosa, when a wisp of fleecy cloud  
Veils o'er the sun; and I am nigh to tears;  
But now fair Flora, Berylline, appears  
Near us, nor sheds forbearing pity upon  
My woe; softly, "Fie, fickle Corydon,"  
She saith, "thou find'st thy dainty Phyllis smile  
In every passing eye,—two to the mile!  
A Bella-donna first with orbs of blue,  
What Black-eyed Susan next art thou to woo?"  
She thus the amorous oeillades remembers  
With which I plied her—ay, the merest embers  
Of what ne'er waxed in flames. Nay, my poor heart  
Wots well it never loved till now; the smart  
Prodigious sweet proclaims Love's power; and while  
Proud Flora rules as Goddess of the Isle,  
Rhodanthe o'er all the flowers reigneth Queen!  
And if my wilding fancy's flight had e'en,  
Like dizzy moth, round Circe's flame in rings  
Careened, it had not singed its star-dust wings,  
But breathless panteth at Rhodanthe's small feet.

The Goddess 'midst her darlings takes her seat,  
Bidding me feast with them, and I comply,  
My pulses all a-tremble. Though I try,  
I can't but feel my bodily tenement,  
Gracelessly flounders in a rarer element  
Than is its wont—and with lack-lustre wars  
Against a brilliant galaxy of stars.  
I taste of wine—of sparkle there 's no trace,  
For gazing on Rhodanthe's entrancing face,  
I long to sip the nectar of her lips—  
No Feast-King nigh my soul's bright thirst to eclipse!  
A crook-kneed Ethiop, in solemn state,  
Of heavenly ambrosia on a golden plate  
Presents me—but this far-famed food of gods  
Tastes vapid, stale; and, faith, with all the odds  
Against me, liefer had I backed my soul  
To feed on the air, that musk-sweet aureole,  
Which from her being is exhaled; or free,  
To lose itself for an eternity  
Amid the scented tangles of her hair!—  
What feast, when in your heart a desert bare  
Looms up; and when an arid waste enclips  
Poor nomad Cupid, and his dust-dry lips  
Athirst, would slake them at love's bubbling springs!

When lo! with throbbing of his heart's bright wings,  
He dreams he sees there in the oasis above,  
The cool, sweet, crystal plashing fountain of love  
At last!—to find it all a phantom fade  
Away before his eyes. O will this maid  
So glorious, this Rhodanthe, prove to my fall  
A false mirage? No, no! She smiles, and all  
The sandy desert blooms! My sunless years,—  
My starless nights,—my silent bitter tears—  
Were not in vain! nay, they were happy years,  
And starry nights, and laughing, gladsome tears;  
For they at last my pilgrim steps have led,  
Through briary paths, through blinding mists, storm-fed,  
To her bright throne, the lady of my dreams!

## BOOK II

The feast is o'er. We rise, we two, the extremes  
Of light and life, Rhodanthe and I—yet seems  
One bond our souls in unison to stir.  
Oblivious to all the world, I wander with her  
Into the casement window's snug embrasure;  
The dulcet music of the aërial choir  
Lends wings to love; my lips alone lack fire.  
Amphion, grant one heart-sigh of thy lyre  
Divine, that I may wake the slumbering Cupid  
Becharmèd, in this roseate bosom hid!  
I 'gin to sing; the strain despairing dies  
As doth a Lydian song:—my lady's eyes,  
Seeming their wistful loveliness to span  
Even unto the bright Aldebaran,  
Shineth amid the stars. Thus I began:

“Beauteous Rhodanthe, O list to me!

Ere thou adorned the garden of the world,

I loved thee,—ay, from all eternity!

As in the shell the ocean is impearled,—  
As mountains long to kiss the shining cloud,  
As rivers love the sea,  
And florets to the sun bare bosoms proud—  
So I was drawn to thee—  
My love-wings in thy heart forever to enshroud.

“A dreaming, wondering, worshipping boy,  
I wandered sadly o’er the gorse-starred downs,—  
As Io tortured—in a search for joy—  
For thee. Thy name ’mong castellated towns  
I called—’mid plains, and every pelting hill-top;  
And with the sighing pine,  
And with the waterfall’s endiamond drop,  
And wind in Apennine,  
I cried for thee, nor dared my soul in fear to stop.

“But with the throe of sobbing rain,  
I mingled my pale symphonies of song,  
Till in the night ’mid rhapsodies of pain,  
The tender birds in pity quired along;  
And Nature’s listening heart throbbed silently,  
Her own soft music stilling,



To hear celestial anthems praising thee,  
    Like hymns of dew distilling  
From heaven upon her from sweet bowers of ecstasy.

“Beloved, come o’er the hills away,  
    Where we can love in dells of liberty;  
Untrammelled aye, forever and a day,  
    By tilt and artifice of man—soul-free!—  
Into the laughing valleys, flower-starred,  
    Where blithe Aurora trips  
In roseal sandals o’er the daisied sward,  
    Bedabbled eyes and lips  
With wistful dew to greet the day’s advancing guard.

“Beyond the sun-kissed hills of light,  
    Cloud-capped, into the smile-wreathed valleys, where,  
With iridescent flowering jewels bedight,  
    Enthroned, thou ’lt queen it o’er all beauties rare:  
And Spring at sight of thee shall bloom away;  
    And Love shall know no rue;  
And Time shall pass us by upon the way;  
    And in thy voice I ’ll woo  
The airs of Helicon and sing the live-long day.

“Come let ’s away! Yon is the goal!

Far from walled towns and battlemented towers,  
That straitly cabin the heaven-aspiring soul;  
And with the intrepid lark’s aërial powers,  
Through pathless skies we ’ll wing our blithesome flight;  
O’er crags and billowy main,  
And eerie cliffs, around whose dizzy height  
The sea-mews cry in pain,  
And tortured Ocean moans throughout her sleepless night.

“O leave the gilded halls of ease,

Where Sloth, envisaged in her hollow mask;  
Where Vanity and Pleasures, reeked with lees,  
In stuffed cothurnus strut athwart their task,—  
Across their brief and narrow earthly stage;  
Still thinking with their base,  
Sepulchral voice to tease the flippant age  
Into a happier race,  
And shame old theories with their barbèd persiflage.

“Ah, no! the Dorian ring of joy

They cannot simulate,—nor thrill the being  
To heights of high resolve,—with false alloy:  
They mock at Time and Truth’s full, sweet congreeing!

So let 's away, Belovèd, let 's away,—

We two and Love alone,

Beyond the ken of man and his dull day,

Beyond his little zone,

Beyond his pigmy dreams of the old Utopia.

“The feast forego, Love, for a pot

Of greeny, tender herbs; the wine for water

From Ida's cooling streams; and it thy lot,

These flowering robes of Flora's regal daughter,

To exchange for simple weaves thine own fair hand

Shall fashion from the flax;

Then shall our myrtle tree of love expand,

Even to heaven, and wax,

Till in its starry blossoms the turtle shall bless the land.

“Till in its blossoms, that star the night,

The turtle's cooing notes shall breathe of peace,

Forever and a day. O take thy flight

With me, Beloved, to win fore'er surcease

Of sorrow from life's glittering eye-bite dross;

From clinking compliment,

So empty, of the Janus-faced, whose cross

Triples man's discontent,

And dooms communing hearts to their eternal loss!

“Fly to the free, illimitable air!

Where Jove’s blue dome shall canopy our heads;  
His emeralds ’neath our feet; for matin-prayer

The choiring throistles, that watch our flowered beds;  
While nightingales our wandering footsteps charm,

Whither the pomegranate-tree  
O’erspreads her blossoms to keep us from all harm,  
Blossoms of purity,  
Like thine—thy soul, thy temples, and white dazzling arm.

“O Love, we ’ll glory on the way

Of Life, which leads unto the way Eternal;  
And feed our souls against the immortal day,

With rare ambrosia of sweet dreams supernal:  
We ’ll feast whene’er the woodbine nods her bells;

And slake our mortal thirst  
From sweet Hymettian bees’ most luscious cells,  
O’erbrimming nigh to burst,  
In tawny cowslip cups plucked in fair fairy dells.

“Then, when the Vesper hour fades

Into the glowing twilight deeps of even;  
And Cynthia in her car, o’er cloud-worn grades,

Wheels through the golden patined road of heaven,—

We 'll seek our bower, and live to all unknown,  
Save to the ecstasy  
Of twin-souls melting in night's purple zone,—  
To love eternally."

Thus sang I to Rhodanthe, free, unafraid;  
Thus, rapt in adoration of this maid,—  
Whose beauty, like a glimpse of Paradise,  
Enraptured all my senses, stole mine eyes,  
O'erthrew all nice reserve of manliness,  
Save uncontrolled desire to possess  
Such charms, ne'er poet dreamed or painter limned,—  
I poured my whole soul out to her: then, dimmed  
And faint, as though by Cupid slain, I smart;  
The ruby drops gush from my wounded heart;  
I cease all speech; and like a slave, in gloom,  
Condemned, slow counting his impending doom,  
I wait with 'bated breath my life's eclipse;  
I wait the faintest tremor of those lips,  
Which curved into a rose-bud wet with dew,  
Seem prone to blossom in a smile, or two;  
Or, gods forbid! to fade into a frown.  
She looks at me, then at the stars—then down;

Then all but veined lids are veiled from me—  
Then silence yokes us with eternity.

Again her light cerulean on me steals—  
I drink like one whose brain already reels,  
The intoxicating glances of those eyes,  
Whose curtained lids had caused the agonies  
Untold of Stygian night on me to fall,—  
Now oped, prove heralds of the morn's sweet thrall.  
I watch her as a muezzin from the tower,  
Who, in his lonely vigil's keep, the hour  
Perceives at hand, when Dawn, with banners bright,  
Proclaims the coming pageantry of light,—  
Then calls his dreaming populace to prayer.  
O now for me is rived the tenebrous air;  
The erstwhile lurid world in blossomings  
Of orient pearls and roses blithely sings!  
For lo! Rhodanthe, even with the gentlest sigh,  
Riseth—each movement music to the eye,—  
And looking full at me, so that I feel  
Immersed in clouds of blue, so deep the appeal,  
So tender shone the gaze of those soft sweet  
Sapphiric orbs,—that ne'er in man's conceit  
The like was ever seen,—she held toward me

Her tapering little hand: I still can see  
Its glow of sea-shell pink, its mould—'t would tease  
To infinite despair Praxiteles,  
So exquisite it is!—and then, methought,  
She smiled a wistful wish, ay, even besought  
That I should follow her,—then moved away—  
So slightly—then, as sudden as a ray  
Of moonlight, which a cloud will all engloom—  
She melted like a vision from the room.  
While I, half-dazed, bewitched, all wonderingly,—  
Paying, indeed, the scantest courtesy  
To Goddess Flora, and her daughters fair  
Abruptly left behind,—I, in despair,  
Fly like a hart that panteth for the clear,  
Cool fountains, in a feverish quest and fear,  
To find my dear Rhodanthe, now flown I know  
Not whither.

I, from room to room, tiptoe  
With wings of haste—then list,—then, in the lull,  
Awake the dormant echoes in the dull,  
Dark arras folds with sounds of her sweet name.  
Again, again, I call, my heart aflame  
With fearfulness, lest I my lady's sight

Have lost fore'er—; half-guided by a bright,  
Celestial aura in her path diffused,  
Whilst goaded on by perfumed airs confused,  
That amorously linger in her wake.  
I reach a noble flight of stairs; I take  
Its lead; 't is all of marbles carvèd rare;  
'T is ominous—but still I take its dare!  
Down it I speed—grim terror lending wings  
To love. I come with awed imaginings  
Upon a curious cloistered passage, and,  
Alas, my forward way now ends: I stand  
Confronted by a frowning iron gate.  
Diana to my aid, I note its grate  
Of metal scrolled and tortured into shapes,  
So deft fantastic, as if demon apes  
Had dreamed its dread design in deadly pain:  
Its mastercraftsmanship of Tubal Cain,  
No less,—and fashioned in the stithy-fane  
Of fiery Vulcan, 'neath Mount Aetna's maw,  
What time he would Aglaia's favor draw  
To him. The forgèd ore contorted is  
In forms of leaves and flowers; not fair as Dis  
Frighted from Proserpine in Enna's vale,  
But what rank foison reeks within the pale



Plutonian;—brambles, with their wan white rose,—  
Bog-myrtles lush, and cockles, barbèd foes  
Of plenty,—cypress curst, and sorrowing yew,  
And prickly gorse without its golden hue,—  
Dull mandragora, and marsh-marigold,  
Enwoven with dark tufts of nettles bold;  
Then, strange, a bush of hawthorn, bleak and bare,  
Enwreathèd with acanthus; here and there,  
Crushed myrtle sprigs nigh-clogged with briary thorn:  
Thus serpent-wise to me within seems borne  
This cryptic message in the foliage hid—  
That in a world of doubt and darkness, 'mid  
Unnumbered woes, ambition vaulting o'er  
Innumerable obstacles—a little spore  
Of love would soon be choked in fell despair  
And death.— Instinctively, I, shuddering, dare  
Advance no farther.

Nay, I, faltering, turn;  
My spirit's depths in direst forebodings churn  
At this ill omen,—but, at the memory  
Of her, so ravishing, which beckons me—  
And holds my utmost being in its thrall—  
Half in a wild despair and bitter gall,  
Thus balked; half to despite the gate, I call:

“Rhodanthe!” When lo, this talisman charms all  
The air with an enchanting magic! ’fore  
My dazed eyes the black dead iron door,  
With intergnarlèd shapes of vines and flowers,  
Begins to stir apace with sudden powers,  
Instinct of life, assuming tendrils warm  
And soft and paly green, all nature’s charm  
Of vernal tints; her tender buds blink eyes  
From winter’s sleep; and where the tyrannies  
Appeared before of tortured, twisted metal,  
Now through the brackish mists that ’gin to settle,  
Dissolving brightly as a springtide rain,  
A tall enchanting hedgerow now has ta’en  
Its place, all starred and pied in blossoms rare,  
E’en like a gate of Paradise; and ere  
The jealous thorns that scorn my zeal can tear  
My flesh, I thrust the interlacing screen  
Aside, and with a leap, I am within  
The most bewildering garden-spot love’s eyne  
E’er pictured in its dreams of bliss divine!

“O ’tis the Garden of Adonis!” I  
Exclaim, as if such rare transcendent beauty  
Beggared aught else: “Adon, thy bowers pied!

Where, in thy resurrection glorified,  
The gods have made the Spring to bloom alway;  
Where breathing odors from her isles of May,  
Fair Cytherea comes smile-wreathed to stay,—  
To gather rose-buds where thy life-blood sped,  
And windflowers where thy dewy tears were shed!"

'Tis so, for everywhere with anadems  
Encrowned of precious flowers, earth's starry gems,  
Eternal Spring, in parti-colored court,  
Keeps her high carnival; ay, here, in short,  
Lie her arch-revellers 'tired in every hue,  
From flaming poppy and the hare-bell blue,  
To snow-white of those sisters frail but true,  
The lilies of the vale—each little hood  
Asleep and bathed in shimmering moonlight flood.

Wondering, I take my way, all rainbow-stoled,  
Midst daffodillies,—buttercups, pure gold,—  
Inconstant tulips, whose ensanguined stain,  
Flushed golden blood of Persian lovers slain;  
Past stocks and gilliflowers,—my soul soars free  
With fragrant memories of Araby!—

Here Cupid's favorite, Love-in-Idleness,  
Doth chaste-checked Dian's bud in gentillesse  
Caress: and, then, my varied way entwines

'Twixt pink and purple motleyed columbines,  
Dreaming in drooping cap and tongueless bell,  
Perchance of summer's follies:—in their cell,  
A cowed community of monkshood tell  
Their midnight rosaries, a-listening to  
The blue-bells swinging in the close of yew  
Hard-by; they think it is their monastery call  
To vesper-prayers:—and gold-eyed daisies, all  
In robes diaphanous of the silvery Moon,  
Lie 'long my broidered path.— But I shall swoon  
From heart-ache find I not, and that full soon,  
The jewel of this setting fair, the Rose,  
My wonder-eyed Rhodanthe! Will none disclose  
Her hiding-place? “O Love-lies-bleeding, wilt,  
I prithee, tell me where my Lady's built  
Her bower invisible? I would keep tryst  
With her!”—No answer—sad, I stooped and kissed  
The starry petals of an eglantine,  
Stopping an instant with her to repine  
The loss of those who sang her praise, and grieve  
She favors not all bards alike! I leave  
To greet a wistful wan anemone,  
Sighing where Zephyr wooed her cruelly;  
Her glittering tinsel-veil all torn to shreds,

Lies where the Looking-glass of Venus spreads  
Her mirrored maze; where rests her future path,  
Cast forth from court by Flora's envious wrath.  
But farther winds my walk. I now essay  
What look like star-fields of the Milky-Way,  
Where bloom primroses, white-faced, argent-locked,  
In clouds ethereal vast, so that they mocked  
My search; so on I press, Rhodanthe, for thee!  
Flitting like night-moth toward thy flame-flowered tree:—  
Lo, 'neath the shadowy boughs of claustral yews,  
Which like the ominous pale of fate enmews  
This vale of beauty, I espy weird gnomes,  
And elfish creatures, gathering fadeless blooms—  
Ah, these in their Egyptian darkness, do,  
Conjointly with the Enchanter's Night-shade, brew,  
With hemlock stalks, dread potions for false lovers!  
Ah, not for me!

Thy face seraphic hovers  
In the air, Rhodanthe, beloved, where'er, it seems,  
I go! It lures me on—it mocks—it gleams,  
Within each flowering maze; now here, now there,  
It smiles me to come on,—O, wild despair!—  
'Tis but the pink and white in fairy guise

Of clustering buds that plague my foolish eyes!  
I call aloud her name,—’t is all in vain!—  
But now a pleachèd pergola I gain,  
O’er which the amorous woodbine interwove  
A perfumed way to build a bower of love;  
Beneath, young Adon’s lovely statue’s nighed;  
While nearby sings a plashing fount, bewitched  
To pour its lucent soul upon the enriched  
Proud earth, in liquid diamonds: lo, upon  
Its water-lilied marge—unhappy one!—  
Behold Narcissus pale recumbent, he,  
Who dared to shun the nymphs; his head, so lovely,  
Droopeth upon his troubled breast; poor dream!  
His smiling image taunts him in the stream,  
Augmented by his tears. Alas, for thee!  
’Tis thrice thy woe to read felicity  
In water writ,—but what ’s my fate now due,  
Who sweet Rhodanthe’s elusive love would woo?  
And Echo, in what woody vale of sighs,  
Wordless, bemoaneth thou with streaming eyes,  
The shade of thy beloved? Shall I arise,  
And go to thee, to weep eternal hours,  
The loves that we have lost among the flowers?

Nay, not among Narcissi stays my love,  
Of self enamoured; so, as Jason strove,  
In golden search, the consecrated grove  
To find, where blazed the fleece, I will pursue  
Unplainingly my vexed but golden clue.  
But, oh! what if some ogling water-god  
Have seized thine image and with magic rod  
Impressed thee, my Rhodanthe, to illumine his grot,  
His crystal mine with thy bright eyes, begot  
In heaven's effulgent blue! Ah, now, my woe,  
My fears, 'fore every lovely flower grow,  
If fountains smile at 's petal-broidered gown!—  
Now trail I Smilax sad, where Crocus, crown  
Bespangled, rears his pride, disdaining her,—  
The sin which sealed their ruin; alas, it were  
In vain: I here the world's assembled fair  
Survey, save she I seek in fell despair,  
The fairest in the world! Ah, an 't might be  
She breathes a prisoner in these bowers of beauty!  
To wander here, I 'm grateful evermore,  
In the fluttering hope, which springs from dreaming o'er  
That goal of pure delight, 'neath love's blithe spell,  
Here in this earthly paradise to dwell  
With her in an eternal bliss, alone;

And though unseen, yet not unheard, unknown:  
I'll feel her presence in the moonlight stroll;  
And in the perfumes sense her tremulous soul!  
But an she love me not and would, despite  
My life, forsake the roses and the light,  
As there the scented Jessamine, upon  
Yon cloister-wall, is clambering to be gone  
Into the cold and cruel world without?  
Ah, then, blind Fate, snatch me from hellish doubt!  
Myself to subtle Hellebore translate,  
That I may kill the flowers that I hate,  
When my Rhodanthe lives here with them no more!  
Or, let me, dying 'mid my dreams, heart-sore,—  
Like yonder purple flower, which sprung, full-bloomed,  
From out the blood of Hyacinth, addoomed  
To death by Phoebus, who so loved the life  
He hapless took,—a lesson teach full rife  
Of transitory bliss and triumph frail,  
To all who harken my unhappy tale.

And now, with bootless searching spent, at last,  
As is the ship-wrecked mariner, who cast  
Alone upon some unknown tropic shore,  
Finds rare exotic blooms in glittering store



Plutonian, but no sign of human life,  
His hungry heart desires in pulsing strife  
To see,—I am about to vent my agony  
Of infinite despair, when, suddenly,  
O bliss! a thrill of golden music starts  
The air in tremulous tuneful waves; it darts  
Into the empyrean—I listen rapt—  
The strain soars ever higher, as it had snapped  
The very ears of sound,—up, up ascends,—  
Till Philomel's full-throated sweetness rends  
The veil of night with melody divine!  
As 't were a signal of the tuneful Nine,  
There bursts a flood of light in dazzling folds  
Of brilliancy ineffable, which holds  
My spirit spell-bound in a wonder-vise.  
Constrained to think these signs some strange device,  
Some joyous portent of the sentient world,  
Which watches over my Rhodanthe, I hurled  
Myself with frantic onward rush and glee,  
Directed by the bird's shrill threnody,  
Now driven to the ecstasy of pain.

There is a vista here, a fairy lane,  
I had not seen, where tall, white lilies keep,

Like sainted sentinels, in legions deep,  
A path which leads unto a rosy bower.  
Along this hallowed way I haste—the shower,  
Most mellow musical of Philomel,  
Falling like summer's purple heather-bell,  
By loving zephyrs scattered on the lea,—  
And come to where a crimson nebulae,  
Eye-dazzling vast, of roses, 'tired in hues,  
Tenderly dewy as the stars diffuse,  
Confronts me. O, in faith, it seemed earth's proud'st,  
Supremest effort crowned, she had with loud'st  
Acclaim ta'en up her fancy's brush to paint  
This, Nature's page, in rioting unrestraint,  
With thoughts of transcendental loveliness!  
Then, pantingly, I stop in spirit to bless,  
What 'peared a vision, strange, celestial,—  
That might a dream prove, wild, fantastical,—  
For in the midst of this enchanting throng  
Of roses, all in adoration long  
Prostrated, 'fore a dais raised among  
The worshippers,—within a bower, where  
The sweetest birds unnumbered filled the air  
With dulcet minstrelsy,—and where the scent,  
Dreamy with incense-breathing flowers bent

The willing winds with fraughtage,—ay, and where  
The arrowy moonbeams shot their shafts most rare,  
Illumining this wondrous sight beyond compare—  
Lo, smiling at me sate Rhodanthe, the fair,  
The incomparable She of heaven's perfect dower!  
'T was scarcely clear if she were maid or flower,  
Until her beatific countenance,  
Irradiating its seraphic glance,  
Revealed the rare resplendence of her face.  
Ah, then,—as spirits of angelic grace,  
From consort with the Infinite Good, ensainted,  
Cast on us mortal creatures, sin-attainted,  
Benign regard, and with a moiety  
Of their sweet love for us, uplift us, lowly,  
Unto empyreal heights,—so she, with one  
Bewilderingly tender flash of the sun  
Of all the beauty in her fierce control,  
Stirred tremulous emotions in my soul,  
Which like a wave recoiling shore on shore,  
It feels that trembling impulse evermore!

Now throned in cloud-drifts of new-born delight;  
Now dread-appalled lest from a Lotus-night  
Of dreams I wake to find this is some wild,

Some archful Gnomide, incorporeal, or child,  
Born of the soul's concentered fixed desire—  
I, strangely awed, stared dazed, 'twixt frost and fire;  
For if it stay a vision beautiful—  
O let me then to dream continual!—  
But, hark! unto mine ear floats music heavenly:  
"What dost thou fear if that thou lovest me?"  
Ye gods! Is 't she who speaks? What poesy,  
Ecstatically sweet! What roses fell  
From honied lips? O, like a golden bell,  
My being vibrates with crescendoing swell  
Of joy responsive! O, her words to me!  
Leaving her nectared lips reluctantly,  
As bees their hive of honied sweets: "Come, love,  
Come sit with me, 't is I, Rhodanthe." "Great Jove!"  
I cry, "Rhodanthe!" in boundless ecstasy;  
And to her in the entangling flowers I fly,  
To flounder in soft drifts of crimson snow.  
O gods, that I should tremble when I know  
She calls, whom I adore! "Rhodanthe!" I heard;  
My pulses flutter like a timorous bird;  
"Rhodanthe!" O, how her name even startles all  
The world with rare new fragrance in its thrall:  
"Rhodanthe! For thee, beloved, I 've suffered much;

Ay, sought for thee a thousand years!" I touch  
Her tender hand, so flower-soft and warm;  
It trembles as the aspen 'fore the storm:  
"For thee, I've waited, love, alway," she saith.  
O, if it thrills the expanding bud, the wraith  
Of the morning sun to feel in twinkling kisses  
Upon her blushing cheek; if countless blisses  
The murky forest's brooding heart encharms,  
When in the night Diana's soft white arms  
Encircle it,—then may it be conceived,  
In measure, what wild ecstasies were weaved  
And intertissued in my trancèd soul,  
When 'thwart its deep-set and nocturnal stole,  
There flooded was the light of one it loved  
From all eternity!—Our beings moved  
Together, and her eyes of constant blue,  
Throe bluer, as our souls commingle too;  
And like the harmonies of quiet woods,  
They rested there at last in melting moods  
Of one great symphony of love, *sans* end,  
Whose tender note-trills would forever blend.

Forever, ay, for as I clasp her, clad  
In all the matchless beauty of the glad

Melodic heavens, I seem to hold the stars  
To my transported breast,—while Night unbars  
New worlds of golden song,—and Life beteems  
Completest consummation of love's dreams!  
Dreamer of dreams! Thy cup Lethean dull,  
Crescented is to its beatic full!  
Thou soughtest Beauty, earth's celestial song,  
O'er which the Rhapsodist for aeons long  
Hath twanged his Lesbian lyre deliriously!  
The Sage writ rivulets of ink—like thee!  
The Sophist's *summum bonum* and dear phrensy!  
Beauty! ambrosial as Aurora's breath,  
When blithely o'er the morning hills she fareth!  
Beauty! elusive, which Briarean charms  
Might not encompass,—now in thy poor arms  
She liest trembling, palpitating,—see,  
As Cupid over the immortality  
Of Psyche! O the bliss unparagoned  
To mortal! this, proud Nature's darling, zoned;  
Her peerless image! favorite daughterling!  
The prize-work of the omnific Sculptor-King!  
For whom was forged the central vital light,  
And starry lamps swung in the vast of night,  
That Time might gape at her in wondrous awe!

Alas, will not my poor heart crack its flaw?  
His joyous inundation over-verse?  
O thou supernal peace o' the universe,  
Over my being spread thy deathless wing!  
Shield me as doth the firmament enring  
The earth; while my transported spirit, like  
The spark, once famished, flickering, gleeful strike  
The illimitable oceans of the aërial deep,  
And by aeolian magic fed, upleap,  
And kiss the stars!

O let immortal love  
Be mine, that on this beauteous vision, whereof  
I am vouchsafèd, feed! Rhodanthe! pure dove,  
Sweet maid! from thine was lit the Peri's smile,  
Illumining heaven's gate! in Cyprian isle,  
Herald of rosy-bosomed morn! O lulled  
In fairy dreams that scorn life's leaden, dulled,  
Black-stolèd cares, on dais smothered deep  
With vermeil dewy roses, fresh from sleep  
In perfumed dells,—let us attune ourselves  
To love's sweet interlude; while spirit-elves,  
With spangled cloth of silvery moonbeam-mist,  
Curtain our halcyon spring-tide bower; and, hist!  
Ye myriad vassals, vail your flowery heads,

In homage of your queen,—then, to your beds,  
Flower-tucked, and hide your golden Argus-eyes;—  
We 'll give ourselves to lovers' ecstasies;  
We 'll tell twice o'er, a kiss on every page,  
The story of our hearts' dear pilgrimage;  
Now laughing at the dark uncertain waves,  
That buffeted our bark of other days;  
Now drifting far from ocean's boisterous caves;  
Now riding anchor in her smiling ways.

In accents sweet and low,—at my dear suit,—  
As tinkling music of a minstrel's lute,  
Heard on the evening waters rise, Rhodanthe  
Relates, as guerdon of my pleadings warmth,  
The tenderest tale that ever touched a soul;  
I was as though, in magical control,  
A seraph's harp, whose thousand golden strings  
Were labyrinths of melody—deep springs  
Harmonious,—o'er which there trembling played  
Celestial hands invisible—so swayed  
My passion's depths, so stirred its dulcet wings,  
At her recital of the simplest things.  
With starry eyes that shone through dewy mist,  
As when the rain is by the moonlight kissed,



She wistfully unfolded her young life  
To me, even from its earliest baby-strife  
In Syria, rich in roses, her dear nurse  
And cradle; how even in its bud a curse  
Had burgeoned; and, she sighingly discloses,  
How, though the crownèd Queen of all the Roses,  
She had been exiled by the envious crew  
Of some pale-cheeked pretender. With sad adieu,  
She then had to the Isle of Flowers come,  
To sway in sweet dominion this new home  
Of faithful subjects who had followed her;  
And here with other sovrans holding sceptre,  
She ruled o'er several realms of all the Flowers,  
Each in its vantage coign of bee-sweet bowers;  
Each in its balmy clime and favorite haunt;  
Some by the water-side; some 'neath the gaunt  
Uptowering mountains; some on sunny slopes;  
All even as in man's estates, their hopes,  
Their aspirations, and their loves and lives,  
Happy or melancholy, as contrives  
To color all their days, that atmosphere,  
Wherein their souls breathe and are breathed; and here,  
While each to Flora, Goddess Palatine,  
Paid homage due to sovereignty divine,

As Suzerain of the adoring Roses, she,  
Rhodanthe, most joyed to shower on each, heart-free,  
A wealth of love alike—that preened their beauty  
Within her kingdom's pale. But, oh!—and here  
She sighed with such sweet breath, that in their sheer  
Idolatry of her, methoughten all  
The roses had exhaled their souls,—withal,  
She vowed, 't was difficult to please each one;  
Flowers were frail as other creatures, prone  
To petulance, to reinless pride; amain  
To jealousies that scathe; and then, again,  
Although their ancestry from Venus traced  
Its blossoming family-tree, 't was oft disgraced;  
And strange internal schisms raged, as when  
Some pedant faction dared the common ken  
With this false tenet gloze—that in all lands  
'T was held red roses sprang from fire-brands,  
Burning about a Jewish fair *pucelle*,  
Who, martyred foully, the sacring-bell  
Had tolled this miracle: the stake unburned  
Blossomed in roses crystal-white, and turned  
To crimson roses the dying crimson flames.  
'T was pretty—which most justified its claims.  
Then once, she said, all loth to mention names,

A most unhappy war had waged between  
The adherents of the Red Rose and their Queen,  
On one side; on the other the White had been:—  
And eke to internecine strife, alas,  
Rose social wrongs that did the state harass;  
As petty bickerings of a privileged class,  
Claiming descent from Nature's highest emprise,  
The thornless rose which bloomed in Paradise:—  
Then, individual foibles, vanities;  
Dissensions loosening family-ties,—the list  
Was long: and fools and profligates she wist,  
Who wantoned, wasteful of their inward worth,  
With every languorous South or blatant North,  
Which blew their way, the favors, naught but death  
Should ever claim, their sweetest odor's breath;  
As fickle maids will pelt their kisses light  
As froth at every cavalier in sight;  
While others, misers, in idolatry  
Locked fast their perfumed love, their light, and beauty:—  
Then those, who, pranked in costliest filigree,  
Lorded themselves o'er all of low degree,  
Yet bore beneath the hollow cheek's false paint,  
The taunting secret of the canker's taint,—  
Even as in the nether world of man:—

And those, who humbly in their humble clan,  
Lived by the way-side, loving there to be,  
The jewel of their chaste simplicity  
Close-guarded from the gairish day's caress,  
Lest it should lose one ray of loveliness;  
Ah, sooth, these made the world with pride to glow,  
More than the tinsel pomp and glistering show  
Of multitudes, who on their palace spent  
A world of empty spoil and ornament;  
"Which strange phenomenon," quoth archly-sweet  
Rhodanthe, "displays a type, whose pattering feet  
Wear smooth the stones of many a city street.  
In troth, similitudes like these, one can  
Trace in the world of Flowers and world of Man,  
*Ad infinitum*." Here she heaved a sigh;  
Then stooping kissed a sister-rose close-by,  
Divinely whispering me: "What miracle!  
That out of common clay, this flower, ethereal  
As cloud-wreaths melting in the skies, can mould  
A glorious crown of crimson and of gold;  
Its exhalations spicing the world for thee  
With aromatic airs of Araby;  
Till hoary Tellus swells his doting heart,  
Each time he contemplates his magian art!"

“Good sooth,” I cry, inspired by her eyes,  
“’Tis even thus our spherey mortals rise!  
I mind me one, who, clad in ’s peasant gear,  
Scion of humble folk, with lusty cheer,  
Tended his father’s goats ’mong craggy peaks;  
Yet idling not away the days and weeks,  
Time’s golden sands, till death had barbed her dart,  
He listened deep entrancèd, to the heart  
Of Nature beating, while the shadows slept  
Athwart the grassy slopes, or, waking, crept  
Along, with lengthening of their phantom limbs;  
And thus he watched them, till the day-star dims,  
Steal softly in the caverns of the night.  
Oft-times, he noted with a strange delight,  
The lovely Naiads, wreathed with lily-crown,  
Lure in their mirrored palace fathoms down  
A crystal-pool, the beauteous cloud-gods, fair  
As Adon, who, in sweetest dalliance there,  
In those enchanting grots, would linger long,  
Till Phoebus, blazing-eyed, the amorous throng  
Compellèd back to the heavens to upswarm,  
Transforming them in monsters of the storm:  
And when the wrath of high Olympus hurled  
The blinding thunderbolts about his curled

And boyish head; and, at each breath he took,  
The forkèd lightnings' fitful cracklings shook  
The pillared base of all creation;  
And winds afire rushed with swift elation;  
And in their lairs crouched savage beasts of prey  
Afeard,—he loved the tempest's splendid play,  
And tamed the maddened winds with tender hand;  
Until the moon, beneficent and bland,  
Unrolling radiance from the vaporous rack,  
Lulled all the fiery elementals back  
To peace again from their dynamic wars;  
Then, sleeping 'neath the canopy of stars,  
Upon the bosom of his Mother Earth,  
The youth dreamed o'er these beauties and their birth;  
And in the day he sang them in his songs,  
Till all the people, chafing o'er their wrongs  
And sufferings, flocked to his hills to hear him tell  
Of Earth's delight, divinity, and spell,  
In wondrous chords of colors and of sounds;  
The things they saw, but which the mortal bounds—  
But which his spirit-eyes led them to see,  
And which his voice made them to sing as he,  
Whose spirit loved the spirits of the hills,  
The whispering trees, the vales, and murmuring rills:

And thus the peasant formed of common mould,  
Became a prophet with a heart of gold,  
And soul revered, a seer 'cross life's span,  
And man's divine interpreter of man."

Thus ardent o'er my theme I spoke; I stole  
No glance aside, my gaze upon the goal,  
Like strained-neck courser fixed;—my tale was told;  
And I'd not noticed pearly tears had rolled  
Their star-lit worlds of love and pity o'er  
Rhodanthe's long trembling lashes; precious store!  
That smiled like sunlight streaming through the mist  
Of morn. Ah, would I had been bold!—had kissed  
Away those rueful cloudlets, as the sun  
Dispersed them; but a holy fear, anon,  
Possessed me 'fore this flower beyond my reach:  
So, while my love spurs on, she prays more speech,  
And lured on by the lovelight brimming over  
Blue-tender eyes, I am like any lover  
Constrained to tell my heart's storm-stressèd story,  
With all its aches for all its little glory;  
A mortal's unillumined wanderings,  
'Mid lashing tempests, and the taunts and stings,  
Through which a troubled and apprentice-soul

Must pass, ere it can reach the elusive goal,  
The ever-widening beacons mountain-heights  
Of mastercraftsmanship; those cresset-lights,  
Firing the watch-hills of the starless nights,  
And fed fast by the torch of the Beloved;  
Such dreads and doubts and miserable woe, as moved  
The brave Ulysses 'mid the shrieking fiends  
Of hell's black hole; or him, whose memory weans  
Me toward the world beyond the mystic bourne—  
The blind old minstrel, weak, and phantom-worn,  
Who, begging, seven ungrateful cities trod,  
Oblivious to the covert nudge and nod,—  
The while his tortured ears hear from their tomb,  
The tragic thunderings of the Trojan doom:  
How 't was my lot to wander and to weep;  
With lost Electra in the ærial deep;  
With such as goaded Io to be driven;  
With such as Hercules long to have striven;  
A thousand hounding Furies at my heels;  
And all for that my restless spirit feels  
Unsatisfied, and seeks the goal unknown,  
Unfathomed, undefined, but somewhere, lone,  
And looming still in awe and loveliness;  
That Lethe-stream of lucent happiness,



Where I might steep my soul and free its weight  
Of clinging mire, malice, and of hate!  
And suffering long, as Aeson's son, I strove,  
*Sans* let, to gain my golden treasure-trove.

“And first I hied me—at their merry call,—  
To the joyous Court of the Pleasure Gods:—  
I heard their ribald lauds;  
I heard the rabble in the Wassail-Hall;  
I asked if Happiness was there—and all  
Cried out: ‘Yea, yea! she queens our festival!’—

But, O! I saw the death-wine as it purls!  
Beneath men's feet the buds of virtue torn!  
And trampled on love's flaxen baby-curles!  
And hearts of mothers seared with molten rods!

I wept; I called on Happiness! The scorn  
Alone I list of the jeering Pleasure Gods!—  
She was not there!— I prayed Jove give them mercy,  
To escape the enchantments doomed of Circe,—  
And fled!—

“I faltered on, and came  
Where smiled a Woman 'tired in scarlet shame;

The leering paint scarce masked grim Vice's waste;  
My lips of ashes taste:  
Corruption sows the Night with piteous prey!  
A Star of Heaven on the dunghill lay!  
This Star might have been loved of men alway,  
Had hearts glowed bright with ideal purity!  
Now in the dust she glistered mockingly;  
A tear some gave her—but she jeered and fled;  
Some took the dust and cast it on their head—  
I knelt me down adread;  
My heart dejected, and my fearful soul half-dead.—  
But why these woful tragedies  
Rehearse, Rhodanthe, dear maid?  
These horrent murders of the sweetest ties,  
That garland souls unto the eternal skies?  
What steps from thy celestial gaze for long had strayed?—  
I bade farewell the charred, choked path of life,  
Where I had found but sin and desolation rife.

“Now shifts the scene:—Hail, Croesus and thy curse!—  
Behold me, in the abysm deep immerse  
Myself, where all the crying souls of men,  
From Chaos to the present ken,

Have sought the golden Ganges bath of bliss.  
O list, Rhodanthe; love, I will tell thee this!  
Then, Priestess sweet, thou shalt forthwith to me  
    A Flower-sermon preach,  
Fragrant with thy divinity,  
    To chasten me, and teach  
    A higher soaring;  
Till airs aeolian melodize, and play,  
    Divinely pouring  
Thorough the labyrinths of my soul!—Love, pray,  
    Follow me sadly to the Market-place:—  
    See with what unctuous grace,  
Men drachmas trade for souls, and lose;  
    Lapping Life's golden ooze;  
Grubbing old Mother Earth with bleeding nails;  
Snatching the jewelled ears from 'neath her veils;  
    Uplifting itching palms  
    To Plutus god; their qualms  
And heart-aches vast, Tartarean, beg him hold  
Abeyant, with his amulets of gold!  
    Like royal Midas blest  
    By Bacchus, is their dear request  
Rewarded; and then, magically turned  
To yellow, glistening gold is all they yearned,

Or touched; all, all is golden-sweet;  
Ay, all the very bread they eat  
Grows hard, metallic, tasteless—merely gold!  
And all they drink is burning molten gold!  
And all they love seems hard and glittering cold!  
They would exchange the sow's ear for the purse!—  
Distraught, love, I implore, that from the curse  
Of gold, the gods may surcease bring;  
And like the niggard Phrygian king,  
I bathe me in the Pactolonian stream;  
Then hie me to the fields of Pan to dream,  
In Nature's arms, and hide my Midas ears!  
For I had learned that from the weirs  
Of this wise world of old,  
That none with nets of gold,  
Or corded golden jess,  
Can snare the wingèd-wraith of endless Happiness!

“Again the curtain's rise, sweet Flower-queen:  
Behold the Scholar-Mystic seeking now  
Deep-rooted Past to plough  
For Present-fruit,—to glean  
But furrows on his brow!  
On, on the ploughshare cuts! O wildly keen,

Life's secret from the runic lore of Time,  
And spirit-parleys from the battlement  
Of Heaven, at last to wrest!  
I, in my earth-reared tent,  
All battened down with slime;  
With visage pale and spent,  
As ancient palimpsest,  
Deep delve and dig 'mid pandects wormed and smutched;  
My cell four dank bare walls; my food untouched;  
I tent to find the balm my heart is yearning:  
Locked is the rebus, life is slowly burning!

“O ivy! the reward of learnèd brows,  
For thee I pray, and fast;  
O bring me peace at last!  
Deep, deeper thy poor mortal ploughs;  
Till like Melampus, versed in hidden lore  
Of birds and creeping things, by virtue sheer  
Of young spared serpents, who, in time of yore,  
Had liefly touched to his dull dreamless ear  
Their forkèd tongues,—I dream  
Adrift on Lethe-stream;—  
To fit Life's chain with all her missing links;  
To unravel all the riddles of the Sphinx;

To lure the fairies in the forest wind;  
Refine the crude philosophies of Ind;  
New-search the genesis of gods and men;  
Explore the Milky-Way with diamonds paven;  
    In measures tune Polymnia's lyre;  
    Relume Promethean fire;  
Climb up the craggy mountains of the Moon,  
To learn how much she loved Endymion;  
Converse with Ixion and his loving Cloud;  
O'erscan the Sun's nigrescent shroud;  
Ay, count the jewels in Orion's belt;  
Depict where meet, where melt  
The Rainbow's countless nice-consorting hues;  
Then, far on crimson cloud-boats sail, to fuse  
At last into the heavenward ether, where,  
Mingling in the Olympian thoroughfare,  
I'll fetch from far across the Stygian shore,  
All secrets mortals yearn! Smile not; far more,  
Ay, infinitely more than thou canst guess,  
Fair one, with calm assurance of success,  
I planned, that I might plant on dizzy peaks,  
Piled Pelion-high, o'erreaching Romans, Greeks,  
And Babylonian scholars, the banner bright  
Of my immortal fame!—Alas, poor wight!

My blind black mole soon burrowed into sight  
Of gairish day—but never found the light!

“Now giddy with the heat of day,  
At last despairing by the way,  
Full wearily I sank upon the sands,  
Upon the bank of River Time.  
Poor pilgrim, from the Heights Sublime!  
I watch the woful spectacle, the bands  
Huddled of marching men,  
The vision Mirza's ken  
Could never fathom; and mine fails like his.  
'Life is a dream! O let me wake where bliss  
Unlocked by Death abides, in the happy vale,  
In the land of the Hyperboreans!' This my wail;  
And lo, the messenger of the gods,  
With bell, and book, and pregnant nods,  
Conducts my soul 'mid strains of flutes and viols,  
Unto Mount Helicon, where after trials  
Probationary, wise Urania,  
Bade me from her high nebulae,  
Bedazzling, an I still would steep my soul  
Into the seas of Happiness—and scroll

My name forever on Fame's brazen portals,  
    I must with those immortals  
Conjoin, with those bright essences, the throng,  
Which wings with fledgling pinions flights of song  
    Empyrean. 'In worlds of dreams,'  
    Quoth she, 'fed by the phosphor moonbeams,  
Offshuffle thou the shackles of thy clay,  
And songs of joy wreath in thy dirgeful day;  
Quaff thou this cup of murmurous Hippocrene.'  
Deep was the blushful draught the poesy-queen  
Regaled me; from the star-ypaven floor  
Straight off on pennoned Pegasus I soar,  
Unto the crystalline of heaven's gate,  
    To meet my new-invited fate;  
Teasing the circumambient aether-seas,  
    With songs that shame the crystal-throated lark.  
Alas, poor harpist, on the evening breeze  
    Dyeth thy swan-song's antiphon, and hark!  
Adown the Aleain plain thou fall'st to death  
Of all thy iris-hopes;—but still thy breath  
    Fails not that made thee fair!—  
    I tempt again the upper air,  
Chasing the singing Pleiads through the skies,  
To catch some secret of their melodies;



But bright Aurora pierced them one by one,  
And I fell heavily 'mong the falling meteors prone.

“Once more Amphion lending aid,  
My phrensied songs to man and maid,  
Reverberated 'mong the attentive hills:  
And, lo! methought the rooks, and rocks, and rills,  
Like steeds swift-startled by strange sounds,  
Dash in alarums to the grounds,  
Where I am throned, to hear.  
What ecstasy to win the general ear!  
Full audibly my wonder-work hath wooed  
The eternal plaudits of the multitude;  
My winged ambition overvaults  
The vasty regioned universe; nor halts,  
Until it clangeth at the fretted gates of heaven!  
It is my rightful meed;  
My future loometh big;  
Up Pegasus, good steed,  
Nor for the star-dust care a fig!  
I see my gorgeous monument, which even  
Now adorns, flanked by the admiring throng,  
The Pantheon of the golden age of song.—

Thus do I dream!—and in the cold gray dawn,  
I knew 't was Somnus and his hybrid spawn;  
The Night deceived, and Hope, when morn had fired  
The East, and Earth rang glad with song, expired.”

“But,” fair Rhodanthe to me, her azure orbs,—  
Whose changing wonders all my soul absorbs,—  
Opening like blessed islands of the blue,  
Through Cirri suddenly seen, “is it not true,  
The lyric poet, and bird of silvery night  
In boscaje niched, exhale from sheer delight  
Their panting souls? unburthening the flood  
Divine, oppressive, to the heart of the wood,  
Nor reck for aught save for the song itself?  
Which, startling atomies of sound, from pelf  
Into bright being, they soar and blithely dance  
About the jocund spinning globe; to glance  
Off lustily to the farthest bounds of space,  
Engladdening every creature, every race,  
That listeneth in the Void immeasurable.  
Is that not joy enow? not crown of laurel?  
Not plaudits? Then, sing on! nor thyself wrong,  
To stop and list for echo of the throng.”

"Rhodanthe, beloved, divine despair is Death;  
But Love is Life, and Beauty is its breath!

'Tis why I sought;

Desire's vultures fought

Me fell, insatiable, and 'gainst the bars

Of heavenly gold, all bruised, to clench the stars,

I fling myself, but swoon; I try afresh;

I cannot still the tumult of the flesh:

'O, that I might put off mortality,

Who live lulled in the joys of life!' I cry:

But like the unfledged, sightless eyas hawk,

Waiting for 's mother, whom the cunning stalk

Of gleeful hunters long has lured and slain,

In my lorn lofty home of hope in vain

I hunger, unconsoled, and nurse life's wound.

Love, there's no mortal to be found,

Who chafes not 'neath his dearth,

His weak achievement's worth!

Whoso seeks Truth but ends not ever thus:

Nearing its sun, to feel like Icarus,

His waxed wings melting and his soaring done?

Still we do Nature cope that Art be won;

Still boldly tempt, frail Artisan,

The marvels of the inimitable gods

To mock; and pigmies, with pale golden rods,  
Do battle 'gainst the giant Infinity  
Of Nature, instinct with Divinity!  
We ape the bee to build a Parthenon;  
We boast of looms Arachne's web would scorn;  
We strain our souls to match the linnet's lay:  
Ye dainty daisies' airy shadow-play!  
What Art e'er stole your subtile grace away?  
Who vie thee, Nature, when thou paint'st the rose?  
What Polycletan catch thy daedal pose?  
Or Alchemist dare dream to mimic fire  
Of upturned ruby on thine earthly pyre?  
O bitterest gall, that we ourselves  
Must wait, while Art, with eyes,  
Ledged like falcon, vainly delves  
Thy devious ways and sorceries!  
'O Paradise of Fools!' exclaims the Sage,  
In chasmèd, endless, melancholiness;  
'Life thou hast passed me by; and Art, thine image  
Ever renews its virgin loveliness;  
Its tantalizing sempiternal lure,  
That shall forever and a day endure!  
This was the rift, love, in the lute;  
This was the rind of labor's fruit,

Whose acrid disappointment killed the savor  
Of inward sweetness, and all life's endeavor.

I thought myself as withered grass,  
Meet fodder for the oven. Alas,  
My shining expectation of glad youth,  
A star deep-buried in the dust; and, sooth,  
Forlorn, neglected, by the way-side thrown,  
I watched Life's high-road wind away alone.

"Cimmerian Night now hearsed me utterly;  
She seemed to take me in her sable arms,  
Nursing my woe; beneath whose weighted pillory  
Insuperable, I sank in aguish 'larums,  
Calling on Death, of Night's dark brood, to ease  
My stricken soul's world-sorrow:  
'O save me from the morrow  
Despiteous!' I plead: instead, lulled charms,  
As of a Lotus-laden air doth tease  
My senses till I weep;  
Death's gentle brother Sleep  
Appears, who, dropping juice of poppy-buds  
Upon mine eyes, now languor-blest,  
By Western Seas wafts me on 's breast,  
Far to the Land of Dreams and Fairy woods.

“And while I slept  
There gently crept,  
A tender voice upon mine ear;  
It sweetly fell,  
As vesper bell,  
Or manna from the skies, or tear  
Love sheds upon an infant’s bier:  
It said: ‘An thou  
Wilt find thy vow  
Enguerdoned, Happiness, thy goal,  
Thy golden gate,  
Lure of thy soul,  
At last—then, straight,  
Hesperia, the lode-star follow,  
Who’ll lead thee to the embosomed hollow,  
Flower-broidered, where  
A garden fair  
The engladdened vision treasureth;  
Where thou shalt see  
Unearthly Beauty,  
Envisaged in a maid fame clepeth  
Rhodanthe, who all earth’s fair exceedeth:  
She like a flower,  
In rosy-bower

Of Flora's garden unveiled shall be;  
Take thou the river,  
Which like a mirror,  
Goes glinting toward the emerald sea.'

"She ceased; meseemed  
I saw, or dreamed,  
Rhodanthe, that I, in sooth, beheld thee;  
Quick-startled woke I to felicity;  
Ecstatic beat my heart's wild melody:  
'T was Spring! Earth frolicked in her blosmy frock,  
Of crimson raiments, mystic hue of love,  
With ospreys rare, clasped with a golden lock;  
Apollo's shield blazed high in the heavens above;  
The lark sang blithely in her skyward flight,  
A message thrilled with hope reborn;  
And all the greens with goldilocks were pight;  
And milk-white blossoms waved me from the thorn:  
'Up and away!  
For thee, Rhodanthe, doth stay.'  
I heard the honey-bees and insects chant,  
Mellifluously from lush-sweet amber fields;  
While love-illumined crystal rills aslant  
The daisied meadows peeped like silver eels;

And in their gladness free from monotones,  
The fountains warbled o'er the enamelled stones.

“It was a day idyllic as in groves  
Idalian, when blithe birds and woodland doves,  
In murmuring sanctities made earth thrice-blest.  
Love breathed mysterious longings in my breast,  
And whispered rapturous dream-trysts to my heart;—  
So girding up my loins, all lief I start  
To journey toward the East, Rhodanthe, to thee.  
And now, thou kenn'st in troth, where, fixedly,  
Thy poor Chaldean 's set his meteor bright,  
And peerless constellation of his night,  
Fretted with countless stars! In thee, ensphered,  
Shines Happiness, at last! Sweet Rose, revered;  
Thou gift of all the gods; thou visioned Beauty,  
Incomparable! In contemplating thee,  
My ravished soul, forever, dreamily,  
Shall float on amethystine seas of bliss,  
Unending and immeasurable: and this,  
My heaven! ever by thy side to be,  
Rhodanthe; as ripples kiss the water-lily;  
As Ocean's bosom nests Ionian isles;  
Dear love, I'll bask me in thy noon-day smiles;



I'll read thy rare and ever-changing beauties;  
I'll stroll with thee by day 'mid symphonies,  
Museful of flowers, and, through thine azure eyes,  
I'll watch the starry hosts of heaven arise  
At even; and when thou veil'st them, sleepily,  
I'll kiss the veined lids,—ah, this will be  
The aeon-sought haven of my soul's content;  
And mine the peace that hath the waters lent  
The unruffled skies, and which, like dreams that fire  
The Lotus-eaters, passeth all desire!"

As in this boundless transport I, thus madly,  
Quick-ended my discourse, Rhodanthe smiled sadly;  
A smile, so like the faint-smile of the sun,  
When through the crudded-rack it peers, anon,  
Ere it is swallowed in the night; ay, wan,  
As that which flickers o'er the mother's lips,  
When later year-dreams conjure up, like ships,  
Black-masted, riding into port, trist memories  
Of the babe, of crowing, crooning sovereignties,  
Which crossed the darkling river all too soon;  
So like the shadow of a heart in tune  
With melancholy, that I, fearfully,  
Drew back. "Rhodanthe!" I saw how, suddenly,

The radiant flush of joy had run affrighted  
From her rose-pallid cheek; and, ghostly lighted,  
The effulgent beauty of her countenance,  
Shone 'neath the moon's bright shifting shadow-dance,  
Like smoothest silvery mother-o-pearl; and, lo,  
Her lovely head drooped heavily, as though  
Its haloed crown of spun-gold tresses weighed  
It down; or, as a glorious rose, arrayed  
With thousand petals, bends in freighted sweetness.  
I felt afeard, and spoke with troubled fleetness;  
She answered not: there rose an ominous stillness  
On the air; the moonlight 'gan to quiver fast,  
Convulsively, as though 't would not long last;  
The flowers trembling, seemed to be afeard;  
The Tawny Lily and the yellow Goatsbeard,  
Both of fair Flora's Horologe, marked past  
The midnight hour; the Roses stood aghast:  
"Rhodanthe!" I cried, awe-struck; even as her frail  
Young form swayed like a poplar in a gale,  
And lightly fell unconscious in my arms.  
O now, I fold the heavenliest of charms,  
The epitome of beauty to my breast!  
The silken tendrils of her hair untressed,—  
Sweeter than summer sighing o'er the meads,—

Fan my hot cheek; I tremble like the reeds;  
I quiver like a vessel in a storm.  
"Rhodanthe! Belovèd, look at me!" Her warm  
And palpitating beauty faintly sighs;  
I strive in vain to gaze into her eyes,  
But cannot find their azure deeps; two pearls,  
Orbèd with pity roll from 'neath the curls  
Dark violet of her long lashes. "Love!  
Rhodanthe!" Alas, vain pleadings: "Thou sweet dove!"  
I feel her in my hands resistless lie:  
Ye gods! O what! Can then such Beauty die?  
No, no! 't is mine! for it I've immolated  
A life,—a spirit worn,—and I have waited  
Interminable nights and days,—and thou,  
O gorgon Death dar'st not to cheat me now!  
"Rhodanthe! The pink rose in perpetual Spring,  
Like this, knows nought of spirits withering;  
Nought beautiful can die, or death eclipse;  
Still, still do echo the Memnonian lips,  
When, crimsoning with love, the sunset-heart  
Sends kisses to them! Then, love, none can part  
Thee and thy beauty, and thy beauteous self  
From me; I worshipped thee 'fore all the pelf  
Intreasured of the world! O let the star-shine

Of those loved orbs relume this heart of mine!  
O dost still breathe? Let then the ambrosial wine  
Cordial my heart! Tempestuous love divine!  
The world's supremest happiness now is mine  
At last! The consummation I have dreamed  
Is mine at last, and 't is to me beteeded,  
To cull the rip'st perfection of life's love!"  
Closer the flower-form I crushed, and strove  
To quell my leaping heart of calm bereaven;  
The enchanting face upturned glows like the heaven  
Of heavens; the dewy lips, the hue of pale  
Pomegranate, pouted, fearfully assail  
My soul-enflamed desire, on them to press  
A heavenly kiss. I quail—for such caress  
Might desecrate such awful loveliness!  
Yet what is Beauty, if 't is not enjoyed?  
Those rubious lips would tempt a god! "Avoid!"  
The panting zephyrs in the air—the bees—  
The flowers—ay, all Nature's voice in trees  
And fountains seeming warn me verily  
Of some impending strange catastrophe—  
But I will kiss those lips which I adore!—  
Impassionedly I drained their virgin store  
Of honied sweets—

And then I knew no more!

Straightway a film of Stygian night upsealed  
Mine eyes; the earth upon her axis reeled;  
Portentous thunder shudderingly rocked  
The amazèd sphere, and all the spirits locked  
In fire and water, seemed to have possessed  
My heart, and roused dread bodings in my breast:  
Benumbed I grew; and through my veins a flood  
Of icy liquor flows instead of blood;  
I feel a derelict in slime and mud:  
"Rhodanthe!" I strive to call, but o'er the word  
My lips form,—O, but not a sound is heard:  
My tongue—that once had weaved that word in song—  
Claps inarticulate its roof.

BOOK III

---

## How long

I thus remained insensible I lost  
All count; benighted consciousness long tossed  
Uneasily; but soon confused sounds,  
Dull, indistinguishable as the rounds  
Of ghostly visits in a haunted grange,  
Disturbed my lethargy: and then the strange  
Faint swish of waters on a shingly shore,  
Came gurgling to mine ears; then rumbling roar  
Of chasmèd torrents; then, the long, forlorn,  
Weird chant of chaste Minerva's bird of morn,  
Shattered my cryptic shard;—still but a rift:—  
My heart beats fast with clammy fears; I lift  
My lids and frightened look about; cold streaks  
Of gray disclose the dawn like turgid peaks,  
Jutting in waters of a polar sea.  
Where am I? Where Rhodanthe? What irony  
Of fate? The faery-garden gone! ay, gone

The roses and my lady's flowery throne;  
The silvery veil of Phoebus hallowing all—  
All gone! Alas! instead I stand in thrall  
Of thick and gloomy curtained woods, astir  
With strange, uncanny life, weird with the whirr  
Of ominous sounds; with shrilly birds of night,  
Flying the spectral day; and, gaunt in might,  
Cavernous beasts; uncouth reptilia,  
Coiling, uncoiling, 'mid the leprous fauna,  
As though to slough their horned and spotted skin.  
Here might the foul Medusa murdered been!  
O lurid spot! for murders fit and sin  
Shunning the light—for deeds demonic, fell.  
O desolation indescribable!  
And where last even in coral-blushes stood  
Rhodanthe's rose-bower, now 's a gnarlèd wood,  
Of blackened, leafless boughs weaved all in woe,  
Their forkèd claws cleaved cruelly in their foe,  
Like vengeful Furies locked in Death's embrace;  
Our dais now a slime-green rock, whose face  
Crawls thick with pholases and lichens slippery;  
Beside me yawns a dizzy chasm's mystery,  
Where torrents leap as if to Tartarus!  
In horror I recoil, well-nigh delirious,—

When, as I ope my hand, stove in the mud,  
Lo! like a glittering shower of golden blood,  
A mass of crushed rose-petals fluttering fall  
Into the ooze. Is this the end of all  
My roseate dreams, Rhodanthe?—a memory?—  
I pick the soft pink shells—the flowery  
*Memento mori*—they are scentless, dead!  
Ay, 't is the all-ending all—the shimmerèd  
Dream-fabric wherein Beauty dwelt—all fled!  
'T was too unearthly beautiful to last—  
'T was all too much in love with the ethereal past:—  
Thus ends the pageantry of Happiness  
In Beauty's death,—a kiss—and hopelessness!

Now, with the loss of all—what joy to live?  
Were it not best, unloved, what 's left to give—  
The little breath that fans this mortal flame,—  
And from some rock Leucadian leap, to claim  
Rhodanthe, perchance, in realms, where leaden day  
Veils gardens dread and Proserpine holds sway?  
Where Love is dead, and flowers fade in sorrow?  
Where in the collied night is snuffed the morrow?  
No! Better far in the present urn the past:  
Sweet Memory shall these petals, while they last,



Kiss into likeness of her haunting shape  
Of loveliness!—Ah, Beauty cannot 'scape  
The heaven of the mind, not even be  
The heart forlorn as hell's vastidity!  
No! I'll forever wait, Rhodanthe, for thee!—  
O how the North moans Nature's obsequies,  
Thorough the naked branches of the trees!  
Sad troops of spirits flying from the wrath  
Of thunder-glooming Jove:—along their path  
Flies too Rhodanthe? Cries, too? Beloved! bright-hued,  
Seest me, despairing in the desolate wood,  
Alone?

The eager air bites to the bone;  
I shall incorp the ooze—I must begone!  
But whither? Toward the East? Ah, love, 't was there  
I found thee—Ay, 't is augural! Despair,  
Avaunt! I'll travel on—till life's dark close!—  
Sadly the remnants of my lovely rose  
I gather up, and, heart-sore, start to seek  
The open of the wood. My tendons creak  
'Neath trepidant limbs; low angry mutterings  
Of subterranean tremors twist my heart-strings;  
The ground I tread doth shudderingly quake;

The murky air glints like a brimstone lake;  
Whilst buried alive high in the vault above me,  
The fitful lightning, crackling in great glee,  
Blazes the ebon wood, and seemingly,  
Points fiery fingers deep into the doom  
Of the glade, impenetrably thick with gloom,  
Where I must go. Misshapen monsters, fierce,  
Lynx-eyed, bar up my forward way, and pierce  
The air and belch on me their venomous fumes;  
Whilst dark malodorous wings of bats like brooms  
Innumerable flying past me brush my face,  
Until my heart nigh paralyzed, my pace  
I quicken—then, for fear, begin to run;  
Torrential rains forthwith break loose upon  
Me from the opened sluice-gates of the skies;  
And whipped by maddened winds, like scorpion-flies,  
They lash my face.

Onward I speed. An oak,  
Whose hoary head and massive trunk bespoke  
Its Titan age, reared high in proud revolt  
Deep in the lowering welkin, by a bolt  
Of sulphurous fire is rived right to the root,  
Crashing its measured length even at my foot,

With roar like demon's laughter; its huge bulk  
Blockades my forthright way:—my soul in sulk,  
I am half-daunted,—but enforced to 'scape,  
I wend around his despicable shape,  
Only to sink waist-deep in treacherous bogs.  
To escape a living burial I clutch at logs  
Evasive, and o'erhanging spokèd boughs,  
Which spare me while they lacerate my brows,  
And scotch my hands. Amidst the deafening din  
And carnage of the storm, I hear the thin,  
Ear-piercing screech of gnome-owl, and the qualm  
Ill-boding of the raven, that Hell's psalm,  
Which freezes all my blood till I scarce breathe  
For fright. While ever and anon I seethe  
With gushing joy,—false dawns of hope:—meseems,  
I hear weird voices from the trees and streams  
And current air, hallooing me, yet none  
I see. They call, they pray, they curse, they crone,  
They mimic, chant in an unearthly tone;  
Sometimes right at mine ear, then 'fore me on,  
As if they jeered me to confusion:  
Sometimes they mind me of sweet childhood's hour,  
Or frolics in the heyday of youth's power;  
Or darker days, begun and ended by

One long, low, sad and unconsolable cry;  
Sometimes, methinks, voices of lovers cross,  
So lilting sweet to me their ariose  
Resemblance seems; as though, alas, in death  
As life, no stay their trysting tempereth,  
But their dread punishment is ever thus—  
To meet and then to part.

At last, with ponderous  
Slow dragging of my leaden feet, through brake  
And brere, and rank dense undergrowths; through lake  
And mere, through bruising cacti, milwort fields  
And furze, I stumble, while my breath nigh yields,  
To jaggèd, clodded, frozen ground, which leads  
Unto a bald and lonely crag; sparse weeds  
Alone had striven to hide its naked shame.  
Here intermittent sheets of blinding flame,  
Disclose to my abhorrent gaze, the rage  
Of goaded nature in her wild'st death-wage  
Against herself, to reap the aftermath,—  
As once outfumed the vials of her wrath,  
What time ruled Chaos ere the stars were born,  
And ere her elemental passions' scorn  
Was humbled by a Spirit Voice, whose grace,

Full sweet, yet shook the walls of farthest space!  
I shut my eyes, and turn away my face—  
When, 'bove the enragèd whirlwind's spleen; the shocks  
Of shattered earth; thè dismal cries of flocks  
Of frightened birds; the roars of savage beasts,  
Roused from their flooded lairs, and carnal feasts,—  
There rises to my ear the measured boom  
Of Ocean maddened by the tempest's doom.  
I can descry her in the eastern light;  
Her vast, black, undulating herd, in sight  
Heaves up, like dragons huge with foaming mouths,  
The shore,—then, raging impotently, drowse,  
And roll back fuming slowly, fretfully,  
Into the seething cauldron of the sea.  
A gulf impassable! Must I give place?  
Lay down to die? Or my weak steps retrace  
Athwart that witches' hell of hail and flame?

Scarce orb'd to full these thoughts, when I became  
Unconsciously aware, toward my right,  
Deep-down the rock-ribbed shore, a star-fixed light  
Burned steadily; into my vision dart  
Its arrowy rays, enkindling in my heart  
Delirious hope. A habitation in

This wilderness? Some human wretch of sin,  
Even like myself, marooned to northermost,  
Upon this lurid and tempestuous coast,  
Lone tilting-ground of Titans, Cyclopes,  
And bloody brood-belched aborigines  
Of wounded Uranus? With feverish gait,  
The jagged hillock slope,—blind to my fate—  
Blacker than Tartar's night, I stumble down;  
Mine eyes stuck fast unto that beacon-crown,  
That glistening guide, that terrene star, that lure,  
Which racks of flying rain and cloud obscure.  
As closer to it I approach, more wan  
It flickers, dyingly, for spectral dawn,  
Gaining upon the daemons of the night,  
Now haggard ushers in the sullen light  
Of day, illumining the torn askew,  
And bleeding face of earth with livid hue.  
Nearer, I note, dim where the cloud-rack gapes,  
Shadows fantastic taking on strange shapes,  
Of what at last looms through the blur, a rude,  
Patched hovel blown by the elemental feud  
And hazard of the storm, with saving grace,  
In semblance of a human dwelling-place.  
Pilfered it was from shattered temple, fane,

Whose pillared greatness humbled strewed the plain  
Of sea-blown sand, and seemed the epitome  
Of cities dead, dogged by the unsated sea  
For centuries. Vilely had the mongrel thatch  
Its vagrant self upheaved, as 't were a match  
Against the huge volcanic rock beside it;  
The hail, the rain, the whistling winds deride it;  
Its yawning sides dark inns for gusts from West  
And East to wander in as welcome guest.  
Within, I see a rough-hewn resinous pine  
Blaze sootily, a twofold meed in fine  
Bestowing, heat and light; whilst fast, from out  
The chimney-hole stove in the roof, a rout  
And smudge of black and wind-tossed smoke sails forth,  
As might fell sorcerer's imps from bowels of earth,  
Upon some ghoulish mission bent.

As yet

No sign of life my anxious sight had met  
To cheer it, and I marvelled much, in sooth,  
Not with unmixed awe, if eld or youth,  
What mannered man,—or beast, if such might be,—  
Might call this cave his home: when, presently,  
The unleashed winds with fiendish hissing sound,

In the wake of mighty cracks of the quaking ground,  
And detonations of the bursting wall  
Of heaven above, rend wildly the umbrous pall  
Within the den, disclosing, calmly seated,  
Amidst the din the viewless gods created,  
A venerable old man; his hoary locks,  
Dishevelled by the gale, which sorely mocks  
At age; his long, white, flowing beard low gently  
Sweeping his breast like snow-drifts on Soracte:  
A very Cronos of eternal night!  
His eyes, beneath his beetling brows gleam bright  
As baited lynx; and wound about his gaunt  
And bony frame in wind-blown folds that haunt  
His angularity, a cloak he wore;  
Its yoke was studded round with thunder-stones;  
The clasp was carven out of whale's bones;  
Cerulean 't was of hue, old, faded, o'er  
The which deft fingers,—haply Pallas of  
The azure eye—had broidered for mere love  
Daedalian, weird designs of the immortal great:  
The Olympian dwellings of the gods; the gate  
Of roseate cloud, kept by the wingèd Hours;  
The gods and goddesses themselves—thrones—powers—  
Eye-dazzling mortals; Hebe nectar pouring,



What time the Delphian, divinely soaring,  
His golden lyre twanged; in melodies  
The Muses rapt before Apollo's eyes:  
It seemed a mockery 'neath these sodden skies!  
Under the old man's agèd feet soft lies  
A pelt of spotted gray wolf's dam; upon  
The reechy walls a time-worn sickle gone  
To rust; a broken spar, some galley oars,  
Some tattered fishers' nets, whose snaring chores  
Being done, they did but gape through broken strands;  
The old man held in 's gnarled and trembling hands  
A necromancer's glass, with silver bands,  
Slowly from which a stream of amber sands  
Was falling to the ground.

Albeit I stood  
Within the purlieus of his glance, his brood  
Saturnine startled not,—he still pursued,  
All heedlessly his cryptic task. Whereat,  
I, troubled, spoke, belying fear, begat  
By 's 'havior,—like a torrent icèd o'er  
Rages beneath:—"I pray thee, sire,—” the roar,  
Most demoniacal of the elements,  
Half-drown my piping words of sound and sense,—

“Creature akin in race of Aryan womb,  
O tell me where I am, and why this doom  
Maleficent, outhorroring in rage  
The hundred-headed Typhon’s hellish wage  
’Gainst heaven—to which we twain appear the lone  
And hapless witnesses? this thunder-sown,  
Dread spectacle, than which the galled fiends blown  
From Tartarus, let loose to decimate  
Themselves in gory battle’s blind-driven fate,  
Were not one tithe as numbing in its hate?  
And sire, O say, if prophet, seer in might,  
Where stays the beauteous maid Rhodanthe? Last night  
I knelt in Beauty’s bower imparadised;  
To-day, plunged in the maelstrom, demonized,  
Of damnèd souls! O why with rack amerced?  
What Hecate broods o’er this haunt accursed?  
And who are they that call me from the trees?

The tawny trickling rill of sandy lees  
Slowly outran its course, ere that at me  
This Nestor of the storm upglancèd. He  
O’ergazed me grimly with his glaucous eyes;  
Then in their depths the feeble lustre dies;  
Then, down the corners of his bloodless lips,

Which curl with leer sardonic, lewdly drips,  
Meseems, envenomed hate. He drew his cloak;  
Then toneless words as from the tomb he spoke:

“For thee, fond youth, I here am waiting long:  
‘Last night,’ thou say’st? I heard thine even-song  
Aeons ago! I’ve reckoned cycles since  
Thou fell’st asleep, insensate Fairy Prince,  
Who kindled Beauty’s ruin with a kiss  
Of clay—to forge thy sempiternal bliss!  
These grains of sand in periodicity  
Do symbol centuries! Time’s knell for thee,  
Hath struck in full its whirligig. ‘Last night,’”  
He jeered, “the last Greek Calends soared their flight!  
The quavering course of mortals and immortals  
Is run! Thou art the last to pass the portals  
Into oblivion. The dynasty  
Of famed Olympus fallen, the deity  
Dethroned, deserted, in cold darkness dying!  
King Pan’s stone dead! Ay, e’en the Sibyl’s sighing,  
Which lone endured of her nigh deathless life,  
Hath breathed upon the winds its last. The strife  
Vainglorious of the mad young planet, whence  
Thou hail’st, fierce general wars with violence  
Did fearfully destroy; it wound its story,

Leaving no vestige of its wanton glory.  
Rhodanthe?" he flouted. "Ha! That hell morose,  
Where thou awak'st, held once her garden-close;  
Her wood, through which thou hither cam'st, was late  
The hades of the Hamadryads' fate,  
Sylvani damned, of Fauns, and Satyrs dire,  
Whose heinous crimes deep roused to vengeful ire  
The omnific gods; and here ingloriously  
Imprisoned, to expiate eternally  
Their faults, were they addoomed, had godly gyves  
Immortal proved. On their defiant lives,  
So rathely plucked, the curse fell heavily;  
Forthwith, they felt the rough bark balefully  
Dam up their expiatory moans and cries;  
Seeling the tear-drops in their piteous eyes;  
Their feet in rock-clefts rooted midst alarms;  
A-sudden branches warped their lifted arms,  
Hardened to skyward in a mute appeal:  
And thus mewed up in trees, with forcèd zeal,  
They ordered were to fill the forest glades,  
In death continual, that but the end evades,  
Sharing a fate Promethean; for in their night  
Of doom,—which naught save demon-fires light,  
The while they loathly gloat on their distress,—

They never knew the feel of that caress,  
That cool, hushed murmur of the zephyrs, fan  
Their withering tops; or sap, that swiftly ran  
Throughout their limbs; or heard sweet whispering leaves,  
Or sensed the sway of their huge trunk as 't cleaves  
With lealty deep-bosomed mother-earth,—  
Although the darling of the winds since birth;  
Or plumed their budding foliage in the sun:  
But vainly yearned for Spring Saturnian,  
Which never bloomed again in their old life.  
For all 'twixt them and nature now was strife,  
And bitterest combat of the elements;  
The wanton West-winds, the Favonian, tense,  
From jaded resting in the Aeolian Isles,  
Came revelling through their woe-begotten wilds,  
Shrieking infernal glee; they sweep the bare  
And piteous spirit-trees to earth, and tear  
The poor and bleeding roots, that strive to hold  
Their fresh-knit tendons in the cracking mould;  
Exultingly the extended arms are wrenched  
From groaning sockets scarcely healed; and drenched  
With pelting floods of hail-stones till aghast,  
The limbs are lacerated to the last  
Few quivering leaves; then, with despairing cries,

They see afar hurled from the black-wombed skies,  
The blood-red thunderbolts, time and again,  
Come crashing in their hearts; and, rent in twain,  
They totter, yield, then tumbling headlong, rolled  
Like tortured giants in agonies untold."

He ceased, and said, as he the shadows kenned:  
"But now the World is winding to its end!  
Nature, the Beautiful, which thou hast worshipped  
As Idol, with her dazzling countenance, dipped  
In sparkling liquid emeralds and pearls,  
Blackens and dies; her meadow brooklet purls  
No more of 's spirit-god; her waterfall  
Hangs lifeless in her death-bed silvery pall,  
Athwart the buried rocks: all that 's divine,  
Informing with ethereal grace her shrine  
Ephemeral, fadeth like the myths of Man,  
Who peopled the elusive heights Elysian.  
And Man, who yearnèd so for gods, his role  
Is played; he, who did yoke the soul  
Of man and maid with tree and plant and flower,  
To endue all Nature with a subtle power  
And being of celestial beauty—strove  
To forge them irrefrangibly in love—

Learns that her day of dissolution dawns;  
Her erstwhile flowery, fulgent face, Death yawns  
To Nothingness! The roses of her earth  
Lie wilted, and her forests of ancient birth,  
Belch from their bowels forth the genii  
That in them lived, with longing but to die.  
The mortal canker mocks the immortal gods!"

This trenchantly; then on his discourse plods:

"Recall'st that shattered oak, which prostrate lay,  
And lopped thy path with tremulous limbs? How gay  
It tossed its leafy mane superbly high  
In callow days! Know, that in 's wormèd, wry,  
And blackened shell immured, there lived one time  
In penal woe, that outworn ghost of crime,  
Japetus named, the Titan born, who laughed  
To scorn the mighty Zeus, 'rayed 'gainst the craft  
Of Cronos and his kin. Thus Nature shunned  
His most unnatural lapse. Ah, thou art stunned  
At this recital—wait!" he, smiling, said:

"In yon wild olive tree there languishèd,  
The relic of that tender shepherd lad,  
The Apulian youth, who impiously had  
Defamed the dancing nymphs loved by the gods;

His bitter tongue tastes in the acrid pods,  
Crumbling to ashes in the Avernian breeze!—  
The calls thou heard'st came from the poplar trees;  
Yea, from the imprisoned daughters of the Sun,  
Who still for Phaeton mourn. I saw, my son,  
Thy heart, which ever melts at woman's tears,  
To list the suppliance of these woodland dears,  
Was sorely tempted. Ha!" he taunting sneers,—  
And then resumeth: "Buried 'neath the dun  
Nocturnal cypress, thou didst fast o'er-run  
The Sun-god's favorite, Cyparissus, he,  
Once lovely Cea's pride, who, wofully,  
Long-time bemoaned his soft and milk-white forehead.—  
Look you, here 't was fair Dryope was led,  
Most beautiful of all the Occhalian maids,  
With her sweet boy Amphissus, to the shades  
Purpureal of Lotus blossoms, which,  
Daring to pluck, her lovely hands grew rich  
Encarnadined with blood of the bleeding flower;  
'T was Lotis, and her fate was doomed that hour;—  
She felt the nymph's dread curse: she pleads; she grieves;  
She strives to tear her hair—her hands with leaves  
Are filled; she lifts her little son to her;  
He cries,—he feels his mother's breast,—where myrrh



And honey of his childhood dreams had flowed,—  
Grow hard, rough-rinded as the wartèd toad;  
Over the soft white neck the bark creeps frore,  
Then seals the lips—her kisses are no more!  
She long repented in the Lotus hearsed.—  
Here Myrrha, in sylvestral cloister 'mersed,  
Bewailed her most unhappy love; her tree  
Its amber tear drops shed unceasingly.—  
There, 'mong dead blossoms of the Almond bare,  
Which fringed thy way, thou heard'st upon the air  
Faintly, the plaintive murmurings of Phyllis;  
The loss of her Demophoön, ah, still is  
That woe her wail—that he returned to see,  
Alas, her charms merged in the Almond tree:  
O lover false! O how for him she yearned!—  
But 't is enough! Innumerable they, interned,—  
Whose well-remembered names, like April rains,  
Smelt sweet on earth,—long did in pines, and planes,  
And lindens, silvery poplars, beeches, rage,—  
Peopling this forest, which in the Golden Age  
Emblazoned Tempe;—clapped in Jove-made tombs,  
Of the Underworld deep down as in earth's wombs,  
Still-born and cursed. Some, who, like Phoebus, sighing  
For Daphnes, in the eternal laurel dying;

And many wood-nymphs, love-shaked, their sad lot  
To long some Rhoecus, who his tryst forgot.  
Thus helpless, hopeless, these, with ululations,  
Befouled for aeons long the air—while nations  
Of men inurned their memories in love,  
And thought them spherèd in the stars above;  
Their fate, unknown, to curse their former life,  
Whose fields they sowed with cockle-faults full rife:—  
Thus trespasses against the deity,  
'Gainst Nature's works and wonders was to die;  
As now she 's doomed, and all her genii!  
So art thou answered and the reason why."

He paused, and watched the inky clouds distend;  
Then cried: "But life's grim woes wind to their end;  
For mortal matter mocks the immortal god,  
And Fate relentless flays us 'neath her rod!"

His dark, mysterious prophecy's grist,  
My restless patience dares o'erleap its list:  
"Enough! Enough!" I groaned; "thou seem'st to boast  
For I am gallowed on this spectral coast;  
How have I sinned that I should be so crossed?  
And why to me incontinently lost,  
Is all the heaven of the Flowery Isle?"

The cat-like eyes glint with a steely smile,  
Beneath their shaggy beetling brows of night:  
"Thou dar'st to ask!" he thundered, like the might  
Of Neptune's deep chafed into bellowings,  
Until my heart throbbed fast as sea-mews wings,  
Breasting the ruthless blast of wind and ocean:  
"Dar'st ask? O thou intemperate Boeotian!  
Thou overweening pilgrim from the base  
And unregenerate globe! son of the race,  
Which sand-blind sought'st the bubble Happiness,  
As though it topped the peaks of all Success!  
Didst thou not make the Heaven of Earthly Beauty  
Thine all-absorbing quest, and destiny  
Supercelestial? Beauty, and her minion  
Of Love, ascendant in thy heart's dominion,  
Over the gifts of all the gods, or goal,  
Which might have cradled thine immortal soul  
In bowers of eternal bliss hereafter?  
Ay; and like fools that force Homeric laughter,—  
Ay, like all men,—like even the deities  
Olympian, who their sacrosanctities  
In this same arrogance forgot,—to teem  
All history with this madness o'er a dream,  
This bootless chase for Beauty's Will-o-wisp!

And yet, since first thou learnedst Art's golden lisp,  
Thou wast soft coddled with a nice precision,  
Until vouchsafed Life's beatific vision,  
And leave to love fair Beauty's full-blown flower,  
Rhodanthe, the nonpareil, of rarest dower,  
That doting Nature e'er devised for those,  
Who solve her secret underneath the rose:  
This maid, who for earth's richest prize beseems;  
Whose loveliness divine no mortal dreams  
Surpassed!—And thou, blind 'fore her deathless flame,  
Both won and lost her to the eternal shame!  
Thou sigh'st; alas! to sigh it is too late.”

“Ah, dear Rhodanthe!” I moaned, crushed by my fate  
Tellurian, “who can measure my despair?  
Thou prize, far richer than Atlanta rare,  
Or Dian, to the illimitable love  
Of gods! or those divinities, above  
The common race of man in the world's decree,  
Who dazzled the Idalian groves with beauty!  
O woe is me, remembering in my distress,  
Thy countenance of ecstatic loveliness;  
Glowing celestial—rosy as Aurora,

When forth she blithely sails to greet the day,  
Dight in her ruddy gloryings!—Ah me!”—

“And thou mightst still, entrancèd utterly,—  
Imparadised in contemplation of  
Thy goddess,—basked thee ever in her love!”  
Baited my tempter of the Aetnean snows,—  
“But that bright heaven of the exquisite Rose  
Of Beauty, which, to worship with a passion  
Repured, in lowly, loving adoration,  
Had ransomed thee, thou turnèdst to thy hell!  
Oh, it had shrived thee better than book and bell!  
Perchance, redeemed thee, and all men from doom  
Irrevocable now; ay, and thy gloom  
Despicable of death had not been added,  
Within the very dell, whilere engladded,  
Hadst thou not shown the cloven of thy clay!”

He stopped.—“But I did worship her, I say!  
Ay, dreamed to set her highest in the heaven!  
Higher,” I cried, “than any the immortal Seven!  
In hymns diurnal, Beauty had I crowned  
With diadem of stars; made her renowned  
In song and story from the Antarctic snows

To Nilus!"— But he sneered, with seeming gloze:  
"For that thou strovest in thy small, smug way,  
In thy cramped sphere, thy tiny ball of clay,  
Thine earth, to build in beauty emulous  
Of heaven,—but, O, with aim so covetous!  
And, O, with what infinity of fault!—  
So wast thou blest: and when, in brave assault,  
Thou erst essayed to scale the battlements  
Of high endeavor, keeping, like perfumed incense,  
A holy love intreasurèd within  
Thy fretful heart, thou wast that gift akin  
To gods accorded,—ay, that fatal glimpse  
Into the Flowery Isle of the Flower-nymphs,  
Celestial bourne of dreams terrestrial;  
Fair Flora's everlasting festival:  
With peerless draughts at Beauty's crystal fount;  
With muskèd taste of love-wine, tantamount  
To that, which turned the head of Adon, when  
He zoned the cestus of the Paphian:  
An eye-wink in the sacred mysteries,  
Behind those intertangled tapestries  
Of myrtles and of roses;—and withal,  
A something of that light of love eternal,  
To which, O foolish mortal, thou mightst aspire,

Hadst thou not 'fore that idol, built of mire,  
All basely grovelled, as 't were heavenly dew,  
The earth-jade, Comeliness!"

"'T is false!"

"'T is true!

Thou didst like any perked-up moonstruck churl,  
Grossly pollute, as though some peasant girl,  
In bold embrace of love impassionate,  
The ethereal bright Rhodanthe! didst desecrate,  
With lips irreverent, that rose-bud fair,  
And virgin-honeyed mouth, no human dare  
Defile and live! Wherefore, thou meet'st with Death,  
Whose terminus here marks thy latest breath."

"Was then not Beauty, heaven-born, for love—  
Instilled within us by the Power above?

"Ay, love that heavenward soared!—but man did pale  
With ignomy before her Holy Grail:  
Either with envy, hate, hypocrisy,  
Or sin more rank, he soiled her sanctity;  
And killed the flower,—as thou didst this,—  
Beauty, the Spirit, with an earthy kiss!

Man should have Beauty, heaven-born, with eyes  
Revering, adorations, ardors, sighs  
Soul-shaking, hallowedly, devoutly yearned;  
In rapturous contemplation inward burned  
His heart's desire, with such majesty  
To pinnacle, in 's thronèd empery!—  
But man, the Canker—thou—didst mine the fair  
Chaste bud; so Death, avengcant, to her lair  
Hath tracked thee!”

“Cannot Love absolve me there?”

“Thy soul, from its crass sin, may not be purged!  
Conversion is there not, as Sophists urged,  
Passing from Shades Plutonian up to Heaven;  
Here dost thou find the meal without the leaven—  
Destruction absolute—and Life's sealed door.—  
For thee, now, Beauty reigneth never more!  
The Paphian curve outblotted by thy frailty!  
Empyreal Beauty blasted by thy folly!  
Its fountain in thy heart mere mould upheaves.  
Rhodanthe is dead! Love's flower, like the leaves  
Of the Rose now faded on thy heart of care,  
Hath spent its fragrance on the ingrate air.



Ah, woe the world! Again hath barbèd Beauty,  
To gods and men brought down calamity!  
Again Cassiopea's dazzling awe;  
Again Pandora, eke Andromeda,  
Destroy, as Helen did, who set afire  
The twanging strings of Homer's Delphic lyre,  
Reverberating through enchanting ages!  
Beauty is dead! and Nature's rout presages  
Annihilation. Time, that was to be,  
Endures not more that fell catastrophe!  
Together must we mount the rolling tide  
Into eternal Nothingness, and bide  
The end of Life's worm-gnawèd book," my guide  
Dilated, adding quick; "Come, follow me!"  
And saying which, descended toward the sea,  
With ponderous gait, and bent upon his staff.  
His blazing eyes, his mocking ribald laugh,  
His old-world mien, his flying snake-like locks,  
Struck terror; and as 'mid the jaggèd rocks,  
Piled round him by the play of centuries,  
Laboriously he treads, with scornful ease  
Tossing aside the blasts and torrent streams,  
That smite his nakedness, he strangely seems  
Some long-forgotten giant of genesis,

Begat in embryonic Time's abyss,  
When first the gods called forth the unalloyed  
Congealing matter from the mists of Void.

And as I dragged my leaden feet in 's track,  
New and unspeakable Fear's procrustean-rack,  
Tortured my soul—for o'er me loomed the wraith  
Portentous, ominous of my unfaith—  
The fate inexorable I could not shun  
Of my impending dissolution.  
Dully, like ox wreathed for the slaughter's rite,  
Weirdly impelled, I went; cold beads of fright  
Bedanked my brow; whilst like twin aspens trembling  
My knees upbore me scarcely: but, dissembling,—  
Having no stomach for adventures more,  
And marvelling the goal toward which he bore,—  
I called to inquire if from these imperilments,  
This damned upheaval of the elements,  
I truly would not to my "crampèd sphere,"  
My "tiny ball of earth" return—which, dear  
To me before, now beckoned smilingly,  
With outstretched arms, as if, indeed, to me  
It never had doled out but halcyon peace  
And happiness undefiled.

With no surcease

Of step, he turned his fiend-like face and form,  
Shrieking with voice of sea-gull in a storm:  
"We 're on our way to the engulfing end!  
The gods were myths, and on the tide we tend,  
Which shall blot out the earth and moon and sun,  
Ay, heaven and hell. Hereafter is there none!  
No more shall mortal pasture with the hind;  
No more the lazy Triton shall unwind  
His wreathèd conch, where moon-kist water laves  
The shore; or sea-nymphs quire to the waves,  
The while they comb their lucent hair; no more  
Shall sirens lure to star-ypaven floor  
Of Neptune's empery;—but continents,  
Puissant before, shall sink in impotence;  
Our grave the ocean bed—and worms shall feast  
Upon 's, till ooze and worm, and thou, the least  
Consistent parasite,—and I, blown hence,  
Dissolve into the pregnant waters whence  
We sprung, and all from thy irreverence!"  
He laughed a raucous laugh, which froze my blood.

"False prophet, thou!" I cried, "to tempt yon flood  
I 'll follow thee no more! But tell, I pray,

If lives no higher Power, who guides thy way?"  
But if the wind-imps clipped my weak-winged words,  
Or they were drownèd by the cries of birds,  
Or that my grisly mentor them ignored  
Through supercilious scorn, my query soared  
Away unanswered yet;—and on his heels  
I trudged in silence, fearful, as one feels,  
When super-nature awes the puerile speech,—  
Until at last an inlet dark we reach.  
It jutted 'long a towering cliff from shore,  
On whose huge bouldered base the waters hoar,  
With catapultic force, had battered in  
A deep cavernous antre; black within  
As Erebus it shone below the ledge  
O'erhanging. Here low stooping on the edge  
Of its rapacious maw, laboriously  
And slow, the gaunt old Titan tugged, till he  
Dragged forth a ponderous jangling iron chain,  
Which seemed from time primordial there to have lain;  
And presently in view did weirdly float,  
A weather-beaten, water-logged, black boat;  
Its curvèd prow nosed high in the embrownèd air,  
As if it sniffed some curious business there.  
All-startled at the phantom-gloomy hulk,

So like a fateful monster, back I skulk,  
My heart so numb that I my Charon charge:  
"Is 't possible, that with this rotten barge,  
Thou 'lt tempt the treachery of yon furious main?"  
He minded not—and as it heaved again,  
Belching full out its dark and ancient crib,  
Its antique carcass and each calcined rib,  
To me all of its sad decay displayed.  
He hobbled in unsteadily, and laid  
Adown his staff and took the rough-hewn oar;  
Then signalled me jump in and push from shore—  
"Ye gods!" I groan, "'t is madness sheer! he raves,  
Who dares yon black and welkin-kissing waves!  
Go an thou wilt—I to the wood of fire,  
Rather than risk the unbridled tempest's ire!"

"Then to the wood!" he gibed, "Amphibian!"  
Impulsively I turned to look upon  
The land from which I came—but I no more  
Than tops of charred and leafless trees a score  
Could see—for by the cloud-breaks deluged o'er,  
A flood on land now rolls to join the sea!  
"T is cormorant!" he mocked with savage glee;  
"Best tempt the main; see, mortal, how for thee

The spooming ocean chafes unfettered; thou  
The bowels of her wrath can halcyon now:  
Cruel her rage since Day deigns not to dawn;  
No more upon her bosom doth Vesper fawn;  
No more love-spangled Moonlight pranks her gold,  
Or soothes her deep-pulsating heart of old:  
Soon shall her massing flood engulph the world,  
Nor shall the Mountain of the Muse uphurled,  
Cradle a new Deucalion!"

What choice?

Half-dazed, I find the seat: he doth rejoice  
Lewdly, methinks, and forthright toward the ocean,  
We 're with the sculler's sharp propelling motion,  
Shot swiftly 'long the broad cliff's leeward bank.  
At every impulse—every crunching clank,  
The churnèd waters wilder wax; to me  
They frenzied seem to mingle with the sea.  
My rising fears in fresh alarms accresce,  
As fast the promontory's bulk grows less;  
As our frail bark a-tremble scents her fate,—  
The batteries of waves infuriate,  
Helpless to breast, as with their mightier pinions,  
They on our gunwales fasten their dominions.

And, stroke by stroke, we make the open flood!  
On every side of us, the quivering brood  
Of lapping waves onrush with deadlihood;  
Roaring like demons, down the cliff's base gone,  
As though their goal were straight to Phlegethon;  
Before, behind us, swirling eddies strive  
To englut our helpless craft, and suck alive  
Its human freight down caves, where winnoeth  
The restless tide the trophies of grim Death.  
And shriller, shriller, whistle the exultant winds,  
As oft-times through lone melancholy pines,  
I've heard their haunting funeral dirges gray;  
Whilst gulls and sea-mews, phantomed in the spray  
O'erhead, like vengeful spectres, ruthless wind  
Fate's ghastly shroud about me, grovelling blind  
Within her power; and, above their cries,  
Resounds the thunderous boom, and fell reprise  
To come of Ocean's rage, her every fume,  
Roused from her deep unfathomable womb,  
Wrought up in passion inexhaustible.

O potent hand of Fate inexorable!  
Now like a cockle spewed into the deep,  
We in the black tumultuous ocean leap;

Around us billows roar and writhe in fray,  
Gloating to greet their groaning helpless prey.  
They hurdle us with glee o'er ridge and crest;  
They hurtle us about north, east, and west;  
Now yawning craters gape leagues down beneath  
Our quivering keel; now, holding in my breath,  
I wait, while dizzy toppling walls of waves,  
Like liquid avalanches ope our graves—  
And sepulchred below the engulfing masses,  
I smother;—but we right-up in crevasses,  
Until again tossed high, a perilous speck,  
Topping a watery crag—a pitiful wreck!—  
Half-hidden in the murk of pitch-black clouds,  
From whose distended bellies pours in shrouds  
The doomful rain in merciless derision.  
I clutch in fearful desperation,  
The crackling gunwales of our craft; I gasp—  
My breath whelmed by the buffeting wind; I clasp  
My poor heart, panting frightened 'gainst its side  
In dire panic: O no more in Springtide,  
Warm, awakening, will it pulse at hide-and-seek,  
At Cupid's bashful, tender, rosy cheek!  
No more soft music beat as bird's sweet breath,  
Dreamless of carking hate of storm and death!



Out, out upon the vasty surge we're blown!  
Wave-swept, but still as Maenad carved in stone,  
Rooted by magic on the barge's poop,  
With darkened mien, and imperturbable stoop,  
My pilot stands unmoved as on a heath,  
Or country-side; while on, into the teeth  
Of tortured Ocean's fierce convulsive throes,  
We steadily steer—nor at the craven's woes,  
Crouched at his feet, deigns he a look of ruth,—  
Nay, not an empty word.

At last, forsooth,  
The lengthening vales 'twixt ocean's mountain-chain,  
Seemed some surcease of danger on the main  
To lend our wretchèd bark; and I, the feel  
Of O, a flickering hope deep-sensed of weal,—  
When lo! I saw my agèd steersman raise  
Himself to preternatural heighth; the blaze  
Of glowing coals in his sunk orbits flared,  
As in the veil of mist and spray he stared  
Expectant. Suddenly, with wildering shout  
Like maniacal glee of loonish lout,  
His stretched forefinger darts he in the gloom:  
“Look! Look! It comes!” he cried, “the doom! the doom!

Now will that teach thee prayer!" He laughed. "At last!  
It is the grand climacteric!" Aghast,  
I gazed ahead—while 's mocking laughter clanked,  
Clogging my blood-streams, and my brow bedanked  
With cold congealing sweat.—O sight to quake  
The stoutest heart! O throes of hell's black lake!  
There, on the dark horizon rolling low,  
Toward us, surely, ponderously slow,  
A mighty moving mountain-wave in bulk;  
Rolling toward us like a giant in sulk;  
Rolling in stature higher as it flows;  
Rolling toward us with its pack of woes,  
A Nemesis—outspreading its advance,  
Along the breadth of ocean's wide expanse,  
As if the tides of all Eternity,  
In one uprolled, had demonized the sea,—  
By cataclysmic, vast, upheaving lust,  
Upbulging high the quaked earth's stubborn crust,—  
And tracked us, outcasts, on the tempest tossed.  
"Ye gods!" I wailed. "What shall we do? We're lost!"  
Down at his feet I knelt, imploring—prayed—  
He answered not; nay, rather seemed he paid  
A silent tribute to wild nature's spleen,  
And awful grandeur of that ocean scene,

That ghoulis triumph of destruction,  
As it approached. A weird and strange seduction  
Softened his features—as he watched the gray  
And terrorizing front, by lightning's play  
Ghastly illumined on its lumbering way:  
Now lurid, phosphorescent, livid-green;  
Now lost in Stygian night; now, in its sheen,  
Dim spectres dance in hellish ecstasy,  
And flit across its dread immensity;  
Now fearfully in air its sides upleap,—  
As thunderbolts in volleys rock the deep,  
And shake it centre to circumference:  
Now sinks it down as worn to impotence,  
While low cloud-racks, which rumble on like drums,  
Lend it their haggard company—On it comes!

Crouched in the barge's bilgy bottom lay  
I drenched, and dripping with the cold salt spray;  
Each tendon strained, each nerve wracked taut to stay  
The oncoming adamant shock. With awe  
Half-dazed, half-dead, mine eyes bulge out; my jaw  
Convulsive chatters, and all will ignores;  
My dammed-up terror breaks forth from my pores  
In multitudinous beads of clammy sweat;

My eyes burn blind with lashing brine beset,—  
And on it comes! Already on its swells  
We ominously heave and fall—the feel that spells  
The final dissolution. Louder wail  
The winds their dirge funereal! and the hail  
And rain, and ocean shriek with bursting lungs;  
And wild waves lick us with their lickerish tongues,  
Like lolling ravening beasts a-thirst to seize  
Their nigh death-clutchèd prey with treacheries  
Immitigate. Alas, a little prayer  
To lisp—What end? since all things whatsoe'er  
Supernal now succumb even as we do!  
O ghastly thought!—Ye gods, who did imbrue  
This mind with majesty, so that far through  
The Elysian fields of thought, 'mid lightning gleams,  
It winged a gorgeous flight! O golden dreams  
Of courts and castle-towns that heavenward rise!  
Ye lovely visions of a Paradise  
To come,—that like an incense-perfumed fire,  
Quick from a heart with rapturous desire  
Aflame, lit bright our destiny divine,  
With rainbow-hues all rose and sapphirine,  
To lure us on!—ye in the mists dissolve!  
Ye die crushed 'neath the water-wheels revolve

Of Ocean's Juggernaut, in direful might,  
Never to wake from Sleep's eternal night!  
O earthly body, prized, with love bedight;  
By nature mothered, by her music lulled,—  
Soon soulless, eyeless, cold, to senses dulled,  
A clod, thou 'lt glut the dark insatiable maw  
Of Ocean's Scavenger!—Thus stricken with awe  
I mused all hopeless—when, with impact dead,  
Titanic, irresistible, and dread,  
The mountain-billow whirled us in the air  
Like chaff. I clutched the boat's sides in despair,  
Balanced upon the lofty foaming crest  
Of the enshafed flood; its quivering breast  
Wavered a moment's flash, then back we 're hurled  
Ten fathoms deep into a nether world,  
With oceanic force—ejecting me  
Into the seething furnace of the sea.  
The rotten boat is kindling 'round me strown:  
Half-stunned, half-choked, distraught,—half-dead,—I groan  
With woe-o'erwhelming—searching through the brine  
Engulphing, for the Avenger—for some sign,  
Some last companionable glance,—for crass,  
Shag-eared, uncouth, he was a man, alas,  
And creature like myself!—but he is gone,

And in the embattling flood I am alone:  
But o'er the booming surge, like tolling bell  
At sea that mournful sounds life's last farewell,  
I hear his wingèd words float on the air:—  
“Fear not—it is thy fate—fond youth and fair:  
Thy dizzy moth down-tumbled from the stars!  
Thine endless seeking, through life's jousts and jars,  
Did win the incomparable Rhodanthe for thee,—  
The embodiment of all the World of Beauty,—  
But compassed not thy soul-yearned happiness.  
She was a phantom of ephemeralness!  
And for thy bootless pains and fond delusion,  
To drink the hemlock cup of dissolution  
Conseques; and now is Death's heredity  
Thine undistributable patrimony.  
Now 'FINIS' in thy Book of Life impress:  
Learn like thy forbears in their heart's distress,  
In Beauty only lies not Happiness!  
Thy gods were myths! Hereafter is there none!—  
Thou diest forever—and my work is done!”—

It ceased, that awful voice of doom; and all  
Waxed still, save, in the night's enveloping pall,  
The swish and whirr battailous of the wind

And wave, which lash and buffet me sore-blind.  
In fierce dynamic strife about the sea  
I fight for life,—O sweeter now to me,  
Were't but to save Rhodanthe's bright memory  
From dying with the death of me! I leap  
Up mountained billow-ridges—and in the deep  
Of icy blackness sink, where I 'm assailed  
By multitudinous sea-monsters, mailed,  
That ravening bait at me; and lichens, weeds,  
With cold and clammy fingers,—foul breeds  
And parasitics of the ocean,—bruise  
Me as they drag me to their beds of ooze,  
A thousand furlongs down.

By dour defence,

I free me from their rank entanglements;  
And weary, woe-worn, to the surface rise.  
Lo! everywhere for leagues, to my surprise,  
The angry waters lie all tranquil bright,  
All bathed in an ambrosial rosy light;  
And, o'er my head, through chasms blue for miles,  
A heavenly vision vistaed,—golden aisles  
Of Gothic distances, as far as eye  
Can reach; while sentinel lilies glorify

The flower-paven alleys of the sky,  
And lead unto a bower. There I beheld,  
On dais raised, with damask roses stelled,  
The peerless maid, Rhodanthe; she tristly smiles,—  
O wilding heart that beats with hope's fond wiles!—  
A moment breathes the enchanted effluence  
Its heavenly ardors on my awèd sense,  
Then melts the vision swiftly as a breath  
Melteth into air—O dream of Death!  
Alas, was 't a mirage to illume the way?  
A wistful hope of eke a happier day?  
O bitterest woe!—Heart gloomed, for my last sleep,  
Back to the yearning waters of the deep,  
I give my self—while all the welkin rings  
With fiendish laughter, roars, and bellowings  
Unintermitted, as though imps of hell  
Victoriously exulted in my fell  
Destruction; and again, weird voices moan  
Upon the waters: "'Tis the end! Atone,  
Fond youth, for all thy wanton self-esteem;  
'Tis pity thou didst labor so to dream;  
The mystic Sophists stuffed thy Deities,  
And built Hereafter for Man's tyrannies:  
The World is dead and Beauty's dead—thy muse



Will find her gold hair in the muddy ooze—  
Where in Oblivion lie thou evermore!"—

Loud roared the Deep's doxology, as o'er  
My disappearing head the seething yeast  
Of churnèd waters jubilantly feast  
In victory. As though my heart from 's breast  
Pent-up must burst, I gasp,—then, sleepily rest,  
By black engulfing depths fore'er obsessed.

## BOOK IV

## L'ENVOI

“Perchè la faccia mia sì t'innamora . . . ?”  
Così Beatrice.

*Dante: Par. xxiii, 70-76.*

*Why doth my face enamour thee?  
The light of all eternity,  
Resplendent blazons yonder, see—  
The Gardens of the Rosary!*

*It blossoms 'neath Christ's loving rays,  
Bowered with chants of seraph's lays:  
O wander through its flowered ways,  
These paradisal Easter days.*

*Here is the Rose, wherein the Word  
Divine incarnate was preferred  
Of womankind,—her petals stirred—  
Her perfumed prayers in Heaven are heard.*

*And here the sentinel Lilies stand,  
Whose odors bare the Holy Band,  
And guide into the Promised Land—  
Then give Our Lady Love thy hand.*

A cry of terror 'scapes my lips; hard-pressed,  
I wake: my teeth are chattering with affright,  
Fell and unspeakable, from loathsome sight  
Of vile misshapen monsters of the wave;  
From carking cold of my deep ocean grave,  
Whose muddied cerements gyve me still her slave.  
I shiver—I am dank from horrors wild—  
And yet, methinks, a song even now beguiled  
Me into waking. Was't "The Rose Celestial,"  
Once Beatrice sang?—or dream terrestrial?  
I rub my unbelieving eyes—I find—  
Certes, I 'm safe from storm and wave and wind,  
Within the old familiar frescoed walls  
Of Rosamund's garden-close, where softly falls  
The April sunlight—and which trails its glory  
On Florence's Lung' Arno, wreathed in story.  
There rise the red-tiled roofs, the cypress hills,  
The poplars by the river, and the light that fills  
With orient turquoise of the Tuscan skies  
The crystal air. Can I believe mine eyes?  
"*O bella città dei fiori!*" cries,  
Florence, to thee, my heart in ecstasies.  
Then, all my woes innumerable, the theme  
And figment of a wild fantastic dream,  
Forsooth, must be! Ay, for athwart a row

Of sentinel lilies, white as Luni's snow,  
I see beneath a bower of vermeil roses  
My Rosamund stands, and of my dream disposes  
The last illusion,—save those lucent hours,  
When blissfully bewildered 'mong the flowers,  
I could not tell my loved one from the showers  
Elusive pink and white. 'Twas she! a-glowing  
Even as now—her dimpled arms o'erflowing  
With freshly-gathered florets of every hue,  
Dripping with diamonds of nectareous dew,—  
Daedalian nature's picturesque mosaics,—  
That glad me, gloom-sick from the slimed agarics  
Of ocean's sunless caves.—O roseate smiles!  
O was it strange I sought in flowering isles  
The garden so enflowered in her face?  
The rose reflected with ineffable grace  
In her soft damask cheek?—the gentian blue  
Trembling in her seraphic eyes so true?  
Her temples white as snow-drops—'gainst which presses  
Like curling king-cups, her bright golden tresses?  
Oh, how methought, at first—with woe-distraught—  
The winter's icy fangs my Rose had raught,  
And killed her love and beauty,—till the thought  
Phantasm 'fore the light of truth succumbs.—

I call her. All in smilets wreathed she comes:  
I touch her hands—ah, they are tender, warm;  
I laugh with leaping joy—my circling arm  
Stealeth about her with the olden charm:  
O, with exuberant glee, I fain would yell—  
Like one who well hath 'scaped the pangs of hell!

“Thy brief siesta's robbed the clock of hours,”  
She laughs. “’Tis noon! See, all the heavenly flowers  
Our garden grows in its terrestrial sphere:  
This chaplet's for the Lady Chapel, dear,—  
St. Mary of the Flowers. Look!” she cries,  
Thrusting into my face earth's jewelled prize,  
The dancing lovelight brimming o'er blue eyes.  
I gasp: “Thank heaven, a dream!”

“I pray, what dream?”

“A dream within a dream; for it did seem,  
I wandered in thy garden, sore-bereaved,  
For I had lost thee, love,—and as I grieved,  
By the Archimage of Sleep I was thence lulled  
Proteanly to Flora's Garden, culled  
With rarest blooms that none could it compare:

And in a maid, Rhodanthe, I worshipped there  
The embodiment of Earthly Beauty. Ah,  
Forgetting, in my heavened Utopia,  
Her pure immortal spirit: for which offense  
Into a loathsome Hades plungèd thence,  
I, plangent, wandered, till into the sea  
They cast me of a black obliquity.  
O horrent dream!—That gods were myths, I heard;  
Hereafter, there was none,—and, sepulchred  
Forever, I could never be with thee,  
My love again—O cruel destiny!—  
But all's translated now to joy enthralling!  
Aroused from an Inferno of ills appalling,  
To find the angelic guards, Serenity, Peace,  
Encompassing my soul; to find surcease  
Of misery and pain my smiling firmament;  
And riches, beauty, love, and sweet content  
Unmeasured rain, my Rosamund, for me,—  
Sweet Bride o' the Canticles, pure, good, and comely:  
Come kiss me—and with thy pure spirit bless,  
Rose of my dream, my world of happiness!"

"Alas," she smiles, "thou dost imparadise  
Thine earthly Rosamund, and her love o'erprize!

I warned thee, whilst I read to thee—'t was wrong;—  
And, as thou wov'st into a little song,  
The gentle words that Beatrice spake  
Unto her Florentine,—his love to slake—  
To turn him to the Garden blossoming  
Beneath the rays of Christ,—thy dream took wing;—  
Thy 'Dante' closed—in sleep went rapturing!—  
With mundane Love, too much, thou 'st diademmed  
Thy jewelled-crown of Happiness; and gemmed  
A little world with maiden's pink-white cheek—  
Forgetting still the higher goal to seek:  
That terrene Beauty hath this task supreme,  
To mount the Jacob's Ladder in her dream  
Celestial, teaching Love, her handmaid, rise  
On golden treaders to God's galleries,  
Where she shall live forever in the skies.  
Thou dreamedst, thou say'st, thou couldst not be with me—  
O dream, love, of the all-eternity,  
When we together in God's house shall be!  
And in that dream find joy's serenest gem.  
For Beauty, and her Love, but merely hem  
The singing-robe of Happiness: with them  
Weave Faith; and with this flowered anadem,  
Of dew-sweet buds, we'll reach from Bethlehem

To where bright Thrones and Dominations soar,  
And 'mid dove-hushed tranquillities adore:  
There shall we live and love for evermore—  
In God's fair City.—

And that now we may,  
Set love in order this bright Easter day,  
Love, let us fare through yon sweet trellised way,  
Unto our Lady's Chapel in the close,  
In the Garden, which 'neath rays celestial grows:  
Where Lilies, gold and silver-white,  
Perfume the air with tremulous light,  
And lead unto the Sweet and Mystical Rose  
O' the World:—that through the devious ways of life,  
Divinely nurtured, we may niggard strife.  
Come, let us go, and pass a poet's hour,  
Invoking Love and Beauty in that Flower,  
Which in the Heaven Crystalline its bower  
Of sweets delectable enshrineth high,  
Set in the fairest garden of the sky:  
That She with intercessionary power,  
May lead our steps, where never more to sever,  
Our sun of happiness shall shine for ever.—  
But listen, love," she saith:



Now, suddenly,  
Sweet strains of childish trebles, with melody  
Entune the morning air. Together fly  
We to the lattice, Rosamund and I:  
Below, the Arno warbles on his way;  
Upon our right the Ponte Vecchia,  
His gaunt shape battered by the centuries,  
Outstretches; on the street our wondering eyes  
Behold a stream of singing maids in pairs,  
Their eyes demure, and heads cast down, with airs  
Devotional; while fairy-gossamer veils,  
Like virgin spray that waves in fluttering gales,  
Each sweet and girlish form of grace enfolds;  
Each tiny hand a lighted taper holds;  
Each little voice lifts up clear notes to Heaven:  
"*Regina coeli laetare!* He is risen!  
O Queen, rejoice! Sing Alleluia all!—"

And so in saintly slow processional,  
Singing they pass into the chantry by.

Even then with tongues that hammer at the sky,  
The Easter bells begin to blithely peal,  
In golden harmonies, that woo our leal,  
Commemoration of the risen Lord;

As though, in the Empyrean, with one accord,  
Bright angels, in adoring companies,  
Shake down celestial showers of melodies,  
Like dew upon the hardened hearts of men;  
Who tempered thus, and all attuned then,  
Their joyful spirits breathe in hallowed sighs,  
The concord felt that day in Paradise,—  
Where the Infinite pours ceaselessly His love  
In measureless abundance. A part thereof  
Falleth on us in golden glorioles;  
The iris Easter light o'erflows our souls;  
The sun of joy upriseth in our hearts;  
The spirit of Love, which hovers o'er us, parts,  
In raptures mounting to the Gate of Heaven,  
Where harps and viols to his ear are given,  
To guide his trembling footsteps as he climbs.

O now my spirit ringeth with the chimes—  
There is a Resurrection and a Life,  
Beyond this sojourn of the soul's dear strife!  
I know that Beauty, Love, and Happiness,  
We shall together reap in endlessness!  
Great Love! O beauteous World! Thou 'rt here to be  
Our soul's sweet school to immortality!

O Death, thou 'st lost thy sting! O joy to feel,  
My Rosamund, that come or woe or weal,  
Thy beauty rare shall rise again in all  
Its lure of loveliness corporeal;  
Enshrining in the resurrection of  
The spirit—ethereal and undying love!—

Rhodanthe, thy vision was not all a dream!  
For feately, thou and my fair Rosamund, seem  
Its rainbow colors intertangled in;

As ye had been  
Twin-exhalations of a heavenly love,  
As beauteous Aphrodite foam-born of  
The iris-smiling sea,—  
As wondrous weaved as ye could be:  
O indissolubly!

As sighs engendered in the heart—  
As beauty breathèd into art;  
As notes entwined into harmonies;  
As honey-gold in hives of bees;  
As iris sheen on neck of dove;  
As light from shining eyes of love;  
As moonlight quivering in the wave,  
Or darkness panting in a cave:

And both of ye to serve I strove,—  
But one remains eternally—  
Thou, Rosamund—thou spirit of fadeless beauty!

O inextinguishable bliss! at last to know,  
Where'er the tide of Time will flow,  
Our love lives on for aye;  
And once the narrow way  
We pass into the City's Upper Gate,—  
Where early and late,  
The Angel waiteth with his golden keys,—  
Ah, far beyond the amethystine seas,  
Beyond the Blessèd Isles,  
O myriad intermittent miles,—  
Our day-long work well done, we shall behold  
The Light of Dawn that guards the good Sheep-fold;  
The Star of Heaven, 'mid glorious pageantries,  
Rising at Eastertide,  
O'er all the opal domes oped wide,  
Of Heaven's celestial mansionries;  
And thou, Rhodanthe,—my Rosamund; with Thee,  
The Rose that perfumes all Eternity;  
And Him that sitteth at the Right,—  
In the Garden of the Soul's Delight!



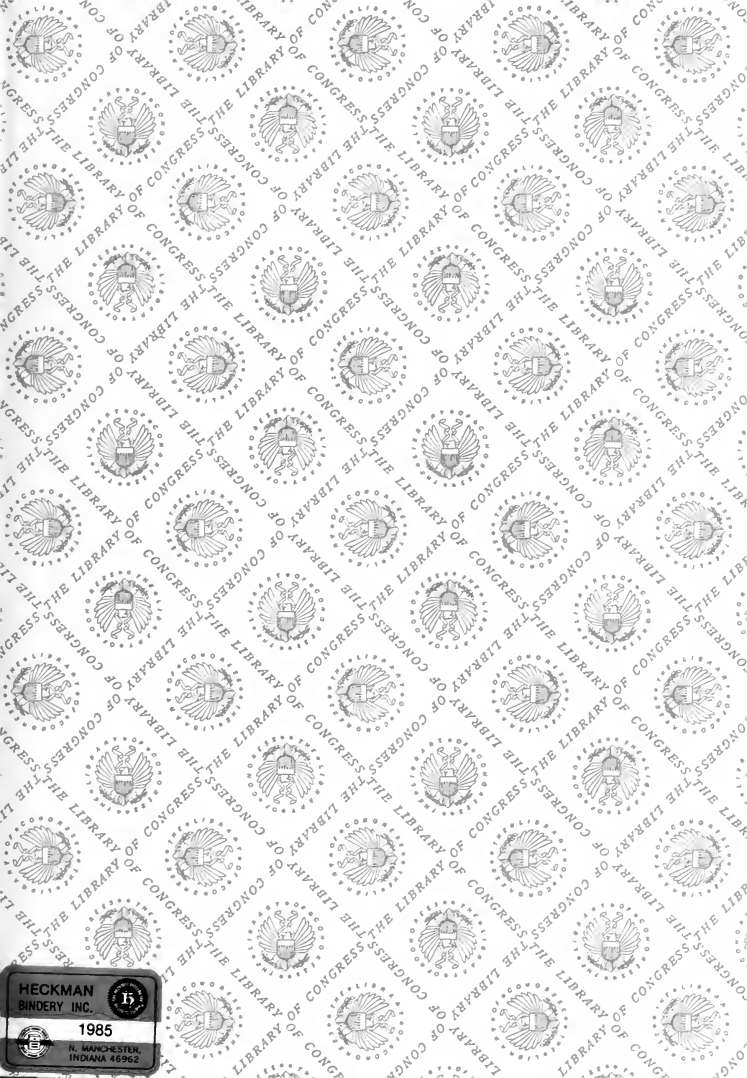




Declassified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date:

FED 1999  
 **BOOKKEEPER**  
PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, L.P.  
111 Thomas Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 15066  
(724) 779-2111





**HECKMAN**  
**BINDERY INC.**

**1985**

 N. MANCHESTER,  
INDIANA 46962

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 005 829 443 3

